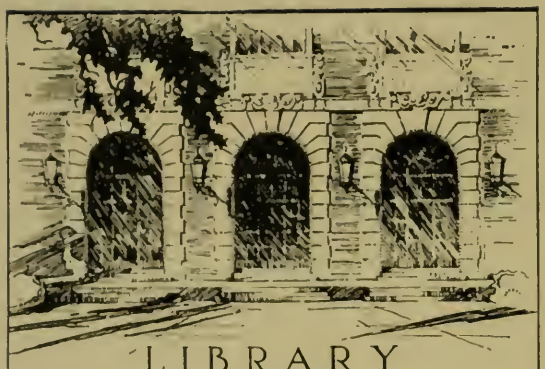

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Departure of Tremenhere—p. 48.

MILES TREMENHERE.

BY

ANNETTE MARIE MAILLARD,

AUTHOR OF "ZINGRA THE GYPSEY," ETC.

p. 140

VOL. I.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO FARRINGDON STREET.

MILES TREMENHERE.

For such a love, O Rachel! years are few, and life is short!"—LOPEZ DE VEGA.

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ANNETTE MARIE MAILLARD.

AUTHORESS OF "THE COMPULSORY MARRIAGE," "ZINGRA THE GIPSY," ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

ERASMUS WILSON, ESQ., F.R.S.

IT IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PRIVILEGES OF AUTHORSHIP,

TO BE ENABLED TO OFFER A PUBLIC TRIBUTE,

HOWEVER HUMBLE,

TO THOSE WHO CLAIM OUR RESPECT:

THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED TO ONE—THE PATRON OF STRUGGLING TALENT,

THE FRIEND OF THE POOR—

ONE, WHOSE FRIENDSHIP IS AN ESTEEMED HONOUR.

THE AUTHORESS.

MILES TREMENHERE.

CHAPTER I.

"Tick tack, tick tack, tick tack—for ever goes the large hall clock, until my heart (imitative thing!) plays at pendulum with it! Seventeen long years that clock has been the monitor of Time in this old house. It commenced its career the day I came into this world, and, faithful to its trust, not for one hour can I remember its pausing. They say it ceased its vigilance one day; I do not remember it, but Aunt Dorcas once told me—only once, for she cried so bitterly that I never liked asking more about it. It was the one in which I became an orphan! My poor mother died, and they stopped it because its ticking reminded them of the day of my birth, when she bade them open her door to let her hear the friend whose career commenced with my life—the friend who was to lead me to be good and happy, warning me of every passing hour! Poor, dear mamma! I wish I had known her—oh, how I wish that

now!—for though my aunts and uncle Juvenal are very kind and loving, yet 'tis not like a mother's love, I feel that —I feel so much yearning for that unknown thing; it must be so beautiful, but one step below divinity in its hallowing power; and I, wicked girl, have been chiding the old hall clock, which she had a fanciful thought to make my twin!" Here the girl (for such was the speaker) paused awhile in her soliloquy; after a few moments, she continued:—"But *'tis* wearisome to sit for days and days, with only the same routine of events which you have known for years; even the variety of the past six months offers no amusement. The lawyer, the parson, and the squire—the squire, the lawyer, and the parson—with my aunts Dorcas, Sylvia, and uncle Juvenal, each one chanting the praises of his or her pet. I daresay it is very wrong of me to think all this; but I don't love them less, my dear aunts, my kind uncle. Oh! especially him and aunt Dorcas; but I cannot like—rather I should say *love*—the squire and the young clergyman, even for their sakes. I didn't want to think of love yet; but they have set me thinking, and now I am always dreaming of the sort of man I should like. If there be heroes in the world I should like to find one—such a one as I *could* love, tall, handsome, dark, dark! Yes, dark raven hair, and Spanish eyes, pale and thoughtful, especially"—— Here the soliloquy was disturbed by a shrill voice beneath the window, calling upwards from the garden, "Minnie, Minnie, child!"

"That's aunt Sylvia," said the soliloquist quietly. "I will not answer, for if I do, I know she will want to go

for a ramble somewhere, and we shall assuredly meet the lawyer."

The voice below continued its summons, but in the distance; the caller evidently was seeking through the garden.

"I wonder when my cousin Dora will come," said the Minnie of Sylvia's seeking again. "And I wonder if she is *very* handsome; they say so:—though only three years older than myself, I was always afraid of her, even as a child. She was so tall and commanding, though but a girl of fifteen then—now she's twenty; and she looked so stern, with her proud curling lip which never smiled; even at play, her play was queenly and condescending. I see her now, when she was at her gymnastic exercises; how graceful she looked flinging upwards the hoop, which always returned unerringly to the stick, as if it durst not disobey her will. *Mine* often rebelled, and fell yards off; and, whilst I put myself in a fever to catch it, *she* was calm and pale, and if she involuntarily sprang upwards to meet it, with what a calm grace she lighted on the toe of one of her tiny feet with the obedient toy in her keeping! There was pride even in that action, for her foot seemed to disdain the earth. It was the only thing I disliked in Dora, her pride as a child; it awed me. I hope it will not do so now. I want to love her. We cannot love where we fear, and I hope she will love me whenever she comes; and yet I feel so nervous at the thought of seeing her, though"—— Here another voice arose on the ear; this, too, came from the garden. "Minnie, Minnie; where are you, Minnie?" it said.

"That's my uncle Juvenal," whispered the girl, peeping through the window, with its antique panes and narrow casement, "and he's not alone. I guessed as much. How he *can* like Marmaduke Burton, *the* squire, I cannot imagine."

"Minnie," cried a soft voice, evidently in the direction of the great hall clock, "are you up-stairs, dear?"

"Dear aunt Dorcas," whispered the girl softly; "shall I go to her?" She moved towards the door of her chamber. At that moment, from beneath her window, arose a hum of voices, and Sylvia's shrilly tones called, "Minnie;" then a man's, but a very weak one, and rougher accents, syllabled her name; these latter ones not calling, but in conversation, and they said, "Miss Dalzell." The one so anxiously sought sat down, and laughed gently to herself. "My aunt and uncle, and their pets! Which shall be mine? Whom shall I marry? Fate, direct me!" and, with a playful air, she took up a bracelet of large coral from her table, and commenced counting. "The last must be my choice, I suppose: let's see, coral! Whom will you favour?" And thus she ran on, a bead for each name: "The squire, the lawyer, the parson; the squire, the lawyer, the"—here the string broke, and her lovers rolled in confusion on the floor! "Alas! and alas!" she cried, with much gravity, surveying the scattered beads, "none of them? Well, when I *have* a lover, I'll string him on the chords of my heart; and when they fail and let him down to earth, why, *I* shall be there too, in my

grave, my heart's strings broken: that's how *I* understand love!"

"My dear child, why did you not answer me?" asked a quiet-looking, elderly woman, entering her room. "I have been seeking you every where."

"Dear aunt Dorcas," said Minnie, throwing her arms tenderly round her neck; "I was afraid to reply, for my uncle and aunt Sylvia are in the garden—*not* alone either—and they would have heard me."

"Who is there with them at this early hour, dear?" As she spoke she released the girl's arms, and seated her beside herself on a couch, affectionately holding both her little white hands.

"Oh!" rejoined Minnie, "that horrid Marmaduke Burton, and Mr. Dalby, the lawyer; and I dislike them both so much, *as they appear now*."

"How do you mean, child?"

"Oh! why—as—as—lovers. No, not lovers—suitors."

"Where's the distinction, Minnie?" asked her aunt, smiling.

Minnie looked down and blushed; then, looking up half timidly in the other's face, replied, "I think a man may take it into his head to pay you attention, wishing to marry you, but he does not love you for all that; and I think, if a man *really* loved you, he wouldn't talk so much about it. Mr. Burton says he's dying for love," —here she smiled roguishly, and peeped up in her aunt's face; "and he certainly has nothing of death from grief about him!"

"Well, the lawyer—what is your objection there?"

"Oh, he's ten thousand times more objectionable! Mr. Burton is only a commonplace squire, looking like one in his top-boots, talking like one, and with a loud voice proclaiming himself lord of the manor, rooks, hounds, horses, and whippers-in! I don't think he's a bad man, yet there is something unreadable too about him, which debars confidence in his goodness; but he's a very disagreeable person, always reminding me of aunt Sylvia's glass of bark in the morning—an amiable invention, but most unpleasant to the palate. But Mr. Dalby,—oh! he's quite another thing!—*thing* he is; too finical to be a man, too useless to be a woman, he is a compound of mock sentiment and unamiability; he drawls out his words, looking you sideways in the face, never giving you a bold, earnest look; he treats you like a sugar-plumb, and seems afraid of melting you by the fervour of a full-face regard, and he never has a kind or charitable word for any one; he's an insinuating creature, but not *in my case*, as he endeavours to be."

"Hush, Minnie, you must not judge hastily or harshly."

"I don't, dear aunt," and she loosed one gentle hand, and put her arm round the other's neck; "but I have noticed so many unamiable traits in his character—but aunt Sylvia thinks him perfection."

"I suppose I must not now speak of my protegé—our young clergyman?"

Minnie looked embarrassed. "Dearest aunty," she said at last, "I don't want to marry; I'm very happy: why so earnestly seek for one to take me away from

you all?" Mr. Skaife is sincere, I believe, in saying, he likes me; I like him as an acquaintance, but I shouldn't like to marry him. He's very good, kind, and charitable, I daresay; but I think he wants that sacred fire which, in his sacred calling, makes the chilly approach, to cheer themselves by the glowing warmth."

"Oh, my dear child! your heart has not spoken, this is the truth; when it speaks, may it be for a worthy object—that's all I pray. *I* like Mr. Skaife: for my sake, dear, try and do so likewise."

Before a reply could be given, the bedroom door opened with fracas, and aunt Sylvia suddenly appeared. She was totally different in appearance to her sister. Dorcas was plump, good-tempered, meek-looking, about forty-five years of age. Sylvia was some five years her senior; a little, thin, sharp-faced woman—one whose very dress looked meagre; not the richest brocade could appear rich on so shapeless an anatomy; it would trail on the ground, limp, and disheartened from any attempt to look well. She had the strangest eyes in the world—a dark, dingy, chestnut brown, of which the pupil was certainly not larger than a pin's head; thin nose, thin lips, thin hair, hands, and voice, completed aunt Sylvia—with the addition of the very thinnest mind in the world. It was like a screw-press; put any thing bulky within it, it was compressed *instanter* to a mummy, and thence doled out in such small particles, that it was inevitably lost in the general mass of which aunt Sylvia was formed.

"I declare, Minnie," she whistled forth in her shrilly tone, "you would provoke a saint; here have I been

calling you at the top of my voice this hour, and you must have heard me! Really, Dorcas, it is too bad; you always encourage the child—you, too, must have heard me."

"I have only been here a few moments," placidly answered her sister.

"Then your conversation must have been most engrossing, for such deafness to have fallen upon you!" and she looked suspiciously from one to the other.

"We were speaking of——"

Before Minnie could complete her sentence, her door opened a third time, and admitted uncle Juvenal. We will only say of him, that he was the bond of union between the two sisters; not stout, not thin, not cross, not quiet; older by three years than Dorcas, younger by two than Sylvia, being forty-eight; prim, snuff-coloured, and contented, having but one desire in the world—the one common to the three, to see Minnie a wife. A warm discussion ensued between him and Sylvia, relative to some words which had passed between the squire and doctor, fostered by their mutual hopes of gaining Minnie, which hope was encouraged—nay, the niece promised to each—by his patron and patroness. Now, Juvenal came to seek the cause, and chide her propensity for loneliness; and while he and Sylvia were warmly debating their disputed points, Dorcas and Minnie crept out of the room, and the former gained the day this time, for she and her niece, this latter with only her garden hat on, left the hall by a side door, accompanied by Mr. Skaife, who had been quietly waiting—it might

have been by Dorcas's cognizance—in a shrubbery through which they passed on a visit of benevolence. Juvenal and Sylvia, finding the birds escaped, descended to the garden, when they discovered that the same thing had occurred respecting the squire and lawyer; both had disappeared. So the brother and sister sat down to talk it quietly over, which terminated as all previous talkings on the same subject had done before—by their completely disagreeing in their respective views, and consequently falling out; in other words, having a violent quarrel. And poor little Minnie—the subject of all these commotions—was quietly walking towards the village with her aunt Dorcas, and *her* selection of a suitor, Mr. Skaife, who, to do him justice, was the most sincere lover of the three; he cared but little whether Minnie were rich or poor, provided she could be brought by any means to look smilingly upon him. He was only a poor curate, 'twas true; but then some day he hoped to be, perhaps, a bishop—Who might say? And in either or any case, he would have chosen her to share all with him. Perhaps she had been correct in saying he did not possess the sacred fire necessary for his calling; but that fault lay to the account of his parents, who had possibly brought him up to the church as a mere profession, when it should be a voluntary choice. If, as she supposed, he did not possess the fire necessary for martyrdom, if summoned to that glory, he certainly *did* the fire of love for the fair girl beside him; and while she wished he were any thing but a lover, both for the sake of a certain pleasure she felt in his company, and for her

aunt's sake, he was wondering whether he ever should win her?—when?—and how?—and in this mood they walked on. Many long years before our tale commenced, a certain country gentleman named Formby and his wife were the residents at Gatestone Hall, the fine old-fashioned place we have just quitted; they were homely and primitive, and withal majestic as the oak-panelled walls of the hospitable home which gave a welcome to many a guest in that portion of her Majesty's domains called Yorkshire, where the "canniness" of its inhabitants consists most in the almost unparalleled method they possess, of winning the way to the heart by kindness and genuine homely hospitality, of which Mr. and Mrs. Formby were well-chosen representatives. They had five children—four daughters and one son. They never troubled themselves as to whether these would marry—that was an affair of nature, and nature was handmaiden at Gatestone Hall. However, art—or some adverse god or goddess—crept in, and marred her course. Of five, only two obeyed her law. Juliana, the eldest, a fine dashing girl, attracted the attention of the Earl of Ripley at a race ball; and, six weeks afterwards, became his Countess. The youngest of all, Baby, as they called her (Jenny was her name, to the amazement of her family, which appeared impressed with the idea, that baby she was, and ever would remain), married, at seventeen, a poor half-pay officer for love; and true love it was. The little god likes poverty best, after all; he generally nestles there, though the song says otherwise. The only change this marriage

made at the Hall was, the addition of another inmate to its cheerful circle. Lieutenant Dalzell became located there for seven months—very short ones they were, too—with his sweet, loving wife; and there, poor fellow! he died of an old wound won in India, which shattered an arm, and obliged him to quit the service. Poor Baby cried like one; nothing could console her, not even the birth of Minnie some months afterwards: so she cried herself into the pretty green churchyard, beneath a yew-tree, beside Dalzell; for, poor girl!—almost a child still when he died—begged so earnestly that they wouldn't shut up her William in the cold stone family vault, but put him where the sun might shine upon him, and the green grass grow, that he had a grave under the bright canopy of heaven, and there, beside him, Baby lay; and only that day, and the one of his death, did the old hall clock cease its rounds by her desire. Then Mr. Formby soon followed, and his wife, leaving three unmarried children, and these three we have seen as bachelor and spinsters still. Whatever the two sisters may have thought of matrimony, assuredly Juvenal had given it no part of his dreams by day or night. *Their* spinsterhood might have been involuntary of their inclinations, but there was no law to prevent his asking; and, had he done so, assuredly he might have had some one at all events, for, though not a rich man, he was Lord of Gatestone, which would only pass away from the grasp of himself or heirs should he die childless, of which there seemed now every chance. Caps of every possible colour, like fly-traps, were set to catch him, by

all the spinsters and widows of the neighbourhood; carriages of every description drove up to the Hall, with inmates perfectly free, able, and willing; but when they left, the only impression behind them was of their carriage-wheels on the gravelled drive. Now all these attacks had become considerably diminished, as time had shown their inefficacy. Strange to say, though Juvenal had evinced no desire to marry on his own part, all his energies (they were not legion) were called into play to effect an union for his much-loved niece; and still stranger, that the three, loving her as they did love her, should have one only thought in common, and be all equally bent on the same scheme, which might probably separate her from them for ever. But it is the course of a Christopher Columbian current in our blood, to be always desirous of exploring some unknown territory. Such was matrimonial ground to them, and they felt curious to watch its effect upon others, personal experience being denied, or not desired by themselves. Minnie was sadly perplexed among them;—they forced her to think of marriage, when she otherwise would have been much more innocently employed; and, unfortunately for them, she had not the slightest idea of condensing all her thoughts on any one of those whom they had chosen. The lawyer pressed her hand—the squire conferred the same honour on her toe, as she stepped on his hand to mount her horse; and the most sincere, as it is ever the case, stood half awkwardly aloof, and sighed as he whispered to the winds, which blew it

heaven knows where—"Pretty Minnie Dalzell! I shall never win her; she's too fair for a poor curate's home!"

Pretty she certainly was, and fair—fair as the brightest lily tinged by a sunbeam dancing across, but not staining, its purity. Such was the tint that flew over her cheek, every moment new and changing; the prettiest lip, such a short upper one that the mouth scarcely closed upon teeth of shining whiteness, like a mother-of-pearl shell wet from the spray, so fresh they looked. Her eyes were of dark violet, with lashes and brows darker than the hair, the former so long and thick they were like a setting round a gem; beautiful eyes, which you lost yourself in looking into, wondering whence came the pure, clear light, which lent them so much chaste fire—yet they were full of soul too. In the forehead, the blue veins wandered like silvery streams through a daisied meadow, giving life to all;—there was the bloom, grace, and poetry of the rarest and brightest bouquet of flowers ever collected together, in that noble brow, and in the ever-changing expression of her sweet face; and above all, her coronet of magnificent hair clustered in rare brightness;—it was not golden, yet it shone like it; nor flaxen—it had too much *expression* in it for that. It was such hair as only a creature like Minnie could have. It seemed as if an angel had spun it in the sun, and waved it by moonlight. 'Twas fair, chaste-looking hair, fit for dew spirit's gems to hang upon. You took it in your hand, and it was flossy as unspun silk, and this unbound fell to Minnie's heel, and yet so pliant and

soft, that her little hand could bind the mass round the beautiful head with ease and grace. She was not tall, but about middle height, perhaps a trifle more; slight, a mere fairy in figure, and the springing foot scorned the earth like a flying gazelle. Talk of her marrying a mere mortal—she should have lived when angels are said to have loved the sons of men. The curate thought of this; so no wonder he sighed, even encouraged as he was by——Aunt Dorcas.

CHAPTER II.

It was in the month of June, the early part, when May-flowers still bloom, and the blossoming trees are not yet in full matronly beauty, but in their bridal robes, with wreaths of flowers, like robes of dazzling whiteness, that Minnie and her two companions walked on (for she loved one and liked the other), her heart giving the rein to all her wild Arab-colt thoughts of nobility and liberty. *She* had nothing to conceal; all was pure and beautiful in her mind, sunny and hopeful. They were going to visit one of Aunt Dorcas's pensioners, and on Minnie's pretty arm hung a basket of charitable gifts, truly such, for they were appropriate to the wants of those for whom they were destined. Gifts of thought and consideration, not merely donations from a full purse or plentiful larder. On they journeyed, until a lane appeared before them; the girl turned down it.

"Stop, Miss Dalzell," cried Skaife hastily; "we had better cross the path-field."

"'Tis longer round," she rejoined; "aunt Dorcas will be tired, and this is a favourite walk of mine," and she moved on.

"You should obey your pastors and masters," he answered, smiling, and yet he seemed embarrassed;

"and, as one of the former, I don't *command*, but may I ask you to cross the path-field, it looks so inviting with its tall grass; and see, there's a pet of yours—a lark rising upwards to allure you."

"Aunty, will it be too far for you? No? then we will oblige our pastor."

"Skaife looked delighted as he assisted Aunt Dorcas over the stile. Minnie was over like a sportive thistle-down blown by roving breeze; scarcely had she stepped on the other side of the stile when a little girl followed her, passed, and stopped beside Mr. Skaife.

"Oh, if you please, good sir," she said, "my mother saw you passing at the end of the lane, and bade me run after you with this book; you left it at poor sick Mary Burns's," and the child tendered a book. Both Aunt Dorcas and Minnie stopped, Mr. Skaife was colouring and confused. "Thank you," he answered, hurriedly taking it; "that will do." He endeavoured to pass on.

"And if you please, sir," continued the child, "mother bid me say, that after you left Mary Burns at three this morning, she was so much comforted by your kind words and reading, that she slept for hours, and when she awoke promised mother never to try and kill herself again."

"What is this, dear?" asked Minnie, placing a hand on the child's shoulder.

"Nothing, never mind, Miss Dalzell," said he; "let us continue our walk."

"No," answered she; "I am curious, I wish to know. "What was it, dear?"

"If you please, miss, poor Mary Burns tried to drown herself yesterday, and Mr. Skaife jumped into the water and saved her, and he sat by her all the day yesterday, and came again in the evening, and remained until three this morning, comforting and praying to her, and——"

"It was only my duty," he replied, now perfectly calm, and in a cold tone.

"*Now* I understand," said Aunt Dorcas, "why you declined dining with us yesterday;" she felt how much he self-sacrificed in not spending the privileged hours of dinner near her niece, especially as he was seldom invited by her brother.

"Oh, Mr. Skaife!" cried Minnie, her eyes swimming, as she held out her ungloved hand and grasped his; "forgive me. I have been a wicked, wrong-judging girl. I said you did not possess the sacred fire necessary for your calling; forgive me, you are following an example in meekness, not arrogantly dictating one—forgive me!"

Skaife could scarcely speak as he pressed her hand.

"Now," she said almost gaily, to remove his embarrassment, "let me follow up this wholesome lesson to myself by an exercise of charity: we will go and see Mary Burns; come, dear aunt;" and once more she was at the other side of the stile, and half-way down the lane with the child, before they overtook her. Minnie and her aunt entered the humble bed-room of poverty, alone. Mr. Skaife left them at the door of the cottage to pay a

visit in the neighbourhood. From a neighbour sitting there, to take care of the paralytic mother of Mary Burns, they learned that the unfortunate girl had been driven to attempt the dreadful act of the previous day, on account of the cruel desertion of one who had led her from the path of right; he led her into darkness, and left her there to fight her way through shadows to the end of a dreary maze, without a word to cheer, or a thread to guide her footsteps. There was no one to tell her of a far off light, which with much seeking and sorrow she assuredly would find. Nothing but despair around her, she flew to death, a sad thing to meet in our unrepented sin! It was to this poor wounded heart that Mr. Skaife brought life and balm. Though humbled and sorrowing, the girl was hopeful now; she did not, however, allude to the one whose desertion had maddened her. Aunt Dorcas forbore questioning her too closely, seeing her evident desire to withhold her seducer's name; and poor Minnie sat and wept. She had learned two lessons that day: not to judge too hastily from a calm exterior, as in the case of Mr. Skaife's warm heart, and that there are sorrows in this world leading often to suicide or madness, hybrids of opposite things —confidence and deceit. They quitted the cottage, promising to see the unhappy girl shortly, and as Minnie bade her cheer up and not despond, she leaned over the low pallet of misery, leaving a better gift in the sight of Heaven than the purse she hid beneath the pillow—a sister's tear over a fallen sister; for are we not all one large family? and of children, too, ever learning some-

thing new—Earth our school, Heaven our home—with glad faces to rejoice over our coming thither, when our weary lessons here shall be over! Mr. Skaife joined them outside, and, by mutual consent, none alluded to poor Mary Burns; but Minnie turned smilingly to the young curate, and spoke more kindly than she had ever done before, as he walked beside her, her aunt leaning upon his arm. However, they parted from him before arriving at Gatestone, and the aunt and niece entered the old hall together, to receive a double fire of indignant reproaches from Sylvia and Juvenal, though the latter was one who appeared ever more inclined to weep than scold; he became whining and lacrymose when injured in any way; he did not stand up boldly to fight his enemy; there was something decidedly currish in his disposition. "I do think," he began, "that I am hardly treated as master here; no one obeys or consults me; Dorcas goes out without saying where she's going, taking Minnie with her; and Sylvia blames me for supineness; —how can I help it?—and Marmaduke Burton blames me too, and threatens never to come again."

"Well, that wouldn't much signify," said Sylvia, bluntly. "I don't like Mr. Burton; he's cunning and sarcastic; you would do much better to attach yourself to Mr. Dalby, he *is* a charming man."

"I don't like Dalby," hazarded the wretched man in his thin voice; "he has a significant manner of talking which makes me quite uncomfortable; I always fancy some one is going to law with me, or that I shall be forced into an unavoidable lawsuit."

"Talking of that," said Dorcas, hoping to change the current a little, as all was more or less directed against herself and niece for their escapade, "does Mr. Burton say any thing more about his threatened suit with his cousin, Miles Tremenhere?"

"Dear me, no!" answered Sylvia; "Mr. Dalby says that affair is quite at an end; this illegitimate cousin has wisely left the country; they never hear even of him."

"I sincerely pity him," replied Dorcas; "it was a sad affair, and his father was much to blame, leaving him so long in ignorance of the truth; it was most painful."

"What's that, aunty?" asked Minnie.

"Well, dear! the manor-house belonged some eight years since to a Mr. Tremenhere, a cousin of the squire's, as they call him; this Tremenhere had an only son, a very fine, noble-hearted young man, beloved indeed by almost all, though very haughty to those he disliked. He attained his twenty-first year; the rejoicings were great at the manor-house; you were at school at the time; a month passed, and the father died; scarcely was he in his grave, when Marmaduke Burton arrived, a distant cousin of Miles's (the son), and disputed the property with him. After a tedious and painful investigation and suit, as no proof could be produced of Mr. Tremenhere's marriage with Miles's mother, whom he was said to have married at Gibraltar, Miles lost the fortune, manor, all, and quitted the country."

"Poor Mr. Tremenhere!" said Minnie, much affected; "what a dreadful thing for him! and where is he, aunt?"

"No one knows, I believe, except it may be one or

two persons, tenants of his father's, who have boldly opposed Mr. Burton in every way for his treachery, and upheld Miles Tremenhere."

"Oh, that was nobly done!" cried the girl enthusiastically.

"What do you mean by treachery?" exclaimed Juvenal and Sylvia in a breath; both joined together in one common cause against Dorcas, who indeed was only kin by name.

"Well, I call it treacherous, mean, and wicked," she answered decidedly, "his having been Miles's companion and playfellow from youth, and indeed in the house but a few weeks before old Mr. Tremenhere's death; and scarcely was the breath out of his body, when he put forth a legal claim to the property as next heir, which claim had been prepared, as it was proved, months before the old man's death." Minnie sat thoughtfully listening, but her colour came and went, like the sun passing over a landscape on a showery day.

"It is very evident," said Sylvia sarcastically, "why you mention this *now* before the child—to disgust her with Marmaduke Burton; it is kind and sisterly towards your brother, who desires the match." Sylvia gained two things in this speech—she never spoke unadvisedly. She pointed out the squire's position more forcibly to her niece; and also, by a counter-stroke, enlisted her unseeing brother on her side.

"Exactly so," whined he; "but that's always the way with Dorcas; she's very cunning."

"I'm sure dear aunt is not that," cried Minnie, start-

ing up, her face glowing, and putting an arm round her neck.

"What business have you interfering?" exclaimed Sylvia; "you should listen, and say nothing."

"Aunt Sylvia," said the girl, calmly reseating herself, "as it seems all this discussion is about me, I am forced to speak, and say, too, that I'd die rather than ever marry Mr. Burton!"

"That's your doing," rejoined Sylvia, nodding at her sister. "I'm sure Juvenal has reason to be obliged to you; and as regards you, Minnie, I sincerely wish you were married, for you are the cause of discussion and dissension every day, not here alone, but between friends. There's Marmaduke Burton and Mr. Dalby, who were inseparables until you returned six months ago from school, and now they scarce speak civilly to one another!"

"Were they friends?" asked Minnie, opening her eyes, "Oh, then—" she did not finish the sentence, but the curling lip spoke what she meant.

"Can the child help that?" said Dorcas, deprecatingly. Sylvia felt as if she had been an indiscreet general, and was on the point of retorting with acrimony, when a step was heard on the gravel outside the window, and one of the subjects of the recent debate walked in—the squire.

"Here I am again," he said, familiarly leaning on the window-sill; "came round through the shrubbery. Oh! Miss Dalzell," and he moved his hat, "this is indeed a pleasure; one seldom sees you."

Had love called up the blood from her heart to her cheek, a lover might indeed have rejoiced in the glow; as it was, the bright flush, coloured brow, cheek, all, and the lip curled, and eye fixed cold and stern, shedding an icy hand of scorn over that young face, as she merely bowed her head in reply. Marmaduke bit his lip, then turning to Dorcas, said, blandly smiling, "And you too, Miss Dorcas, are a stranger; I trust I see you well?"

"Quite so, I thank you," she quietly rejoined, "Minnie and I have been strolling out together."

"Did you call upon Mrs. Lilly?" asked Sylvia. "I promised to do so: she will think it unkind."

"No," replied her sister; "we did not go near the village."

"We went," said Minnie, raising her head boldly, "with Mr. Skaife, to see a poor girl he saved from drowning herself yesterday." As she spoke, somehow her eye fixed itself on the squire; her thought in doing so was, to show him, at all events, no distaste on her part to the society of another, however she might avoid *him.* Was it annoyance at this decision of manner which made him turn so pale, and his voice tremble slightly, as he inquired, "May I ask where?"

"It was poor Widow Burns's daughter," answered Dorcas; "it is a sad affair, but, thank Heaven, Mr. Skaife saved the poor girl's life!"

"Shot! Shot!" called Burton, quitting the window on which he had been leaning, and turning to seek his dog; "here, sir; come here; lie there!" and the animal howled beneath the lash of his master's whip. When

he returned to the window he was calm as usual, cold and sinister in appearance.

"Won't you come in, Burton?" asked Juvenal, going to the window, which looked over the wide-spreading lawn, with its old, majestic trees in clusters, and the cattle browsing beneath them; "won't you come in?"

"No, I thank you," he replied carelessly. "I merely strolled this way to inquire about Miss Dalzell's health in person, as I have so seldom the pleasure of finding her at home. Charity, that cold dame, has much to answer for, in depriving us, as she does, of her society."

"You would scarcely term her *cold*," answered Minnie, "had you witnessed the gratitude of Mary Burns to-day, towards Mr. Skaife."

"'Pon my word!" rejoined he, in a cold, cynical tone, "your parson, Formby (he addressed himself to Juvenal), is a *preux chevalier;* something new in the colour of his cloth!"

"Is humanity new?—or his act unbecoming his calling?" quietly asked Dorcas.

"I am scarcely competent to answer you. *I* have a great dislike to display: things quietly done, in my opinion, look most meritorious."

"Oh!——" Minnie began.

"Pray, let us change the subject," said Sylvia angrily. "I'm tired of your charities and drowned persons. It always happens that the one who saves, manages most cleverly for his deed to be known where he thinks it will benefit him."

"For shame, Sylvia!" said Dorcas.

"Of course," rejoined Burton, with an uncertain, uneasy glance, "you had a pathetic account of the cause; the poverty, the——"

"It was not *poverty* alone," answered Dorcas; "but, with your permission, we will drop the subject."

"'Tis best," he replied carelessly; "these people are tenants of mine, and, I fear, bearing no very good name: we must get rid of them."

"Talking of that," asked Juvenal, "have you succeeded in ejecting that fellow Weld?"

"No; I fear it will be impossible. His lease is good, and was only just renewed for twenty-one years when——"

He paused: something withheld him from uttering the name of Tremenhere that day: Minnie's speaking eyes were fixed upon him.

"Ah! yes; I see," rejoined Juvenal; "it is very annoying."

"The impertinence of a low fellow like that, must be galling," suggested Sylvia.

"What is he guilty of?" asked Dorcas, who was nearly as much in the dark about many things as Minnie herself, associating as little as possible with the squire or Mr. Dalby.

"Why," answered her brother, "fancy the insolence of one of Burton's tenants, whose grounds adjoin his own, who presumes to pass him without even touching his hat; and had the audacity to try and raise a subscription, to which he offered to give largely (for him—being only a small farmer), to find out the impostor,

Miles Tremenhere, and support his claims in another suit to recover the manor-house!"

"Such audacity, indeed," chimed in Sylvia, "in a low farmer!"

"I wonder," said Minnie, looking up in seeming calmness, but the warm heart beat, "whether the smooth-barked poplar has more sap in it than the rough gnarled oak?"

"Good gracious, child!" answered Sylvia tartly; "what do *you* know about trees?"

"I was not thinking of *trees*, but *men*," rejoined the girl quietly.

"Then what did you say 'trees' for?" asked Juvenal, surprised.

"Because, uncle, they represented men to my thought. We know that education and associations refine; but I wonder, whether the rougher class of men was created nearer the slave or brute than the poplar of my thought; whether men are slaves by birth, or to a superior force which makes them such, and makes them bow even their free opinions in subjection to a mightier, not better power."

"Minnie, dear!" cried Dorcas taking her hand, startled by her unusual warmth.

"I see Miss Dalzell is rather ruffled to-day," said Burton, taking off his hat; "so I will say adieu. Ladies, your servant; Miss Dalzell, I kiss your hand, even though it smite me: Formby, will you give me a call to-morrow?" and, without awaiting a reply, he whistled his dog, and hurried away. It would be vain to attempt portraying

all the indignation lavished by Juvenal and Sylvia on their niece, who sat, however, tolerably calm beneath the fire. She was used to these discussions, and these perhaps, and the necessity of upholding her right against being forced into an unhappy marriage, had made her more thoughtful, and less girlish, with them than her age warranted; with Dorcas, she was an innocent child, and this was her nature. With those where she felt the necessity of calling her firmness into play, she became almost a thoughtful woman; and while they discussed, Marmaduke Burton's thin, tall, spare figure walked thoughtfully homewards, and the narrow brow contracted still more over the small grey eye, which, with the high Roman nose, gave him the appearance of a bird of prey. He was only thirty, but looking some years older; he had assumed the dress of a country squire with the assumption of that title, and one was as illegal as the other, and sat as uneasily upon him. The top-boots seemed ashamed of his thin legs, and shrunk from them. Those things generally grace the jovial country gentleman, yeoman, or farmer; on Marmaduke Burton they were as misplaced, as ringing a swine with gems, to give a homely metaphor to a homely subject. There is one person at Gatestone to whom we have not yet introduced our readers; let us hasten to repair the omission. This personage is Mrs. Gillett, the housekeeper. All three, Juvenal, Sylvia, and Dorcas, involuntarily bowed down to her opinion. Why, it would be rather difficult to define, except, perhaps, that as a matron she acted powerfully and sustainingly on these spinster and bache-

lor minds. Whatever occurred to any of them, was immediately laid before Mrs. Gillett to decide upon; she was the repository of all their secrets, and, strange to say, never betrayed one to the other; she heard all, kept all, and *agreed* with all—consequently her position was both difficult and dangerous. Sometimes she met with an unforeseen rock, one of those we not unfrequently may have been called upon to pass over on the beach going to or from a boat at low tide, covered with sea-weed, wet, slippery, and full of holes, in which the sea water has lodged. Well, over one like this Mrs. Gillett often had to pass; she slid right and left, sometimes her shoes filled with water as she stepped into a hole; at one moment she was *nearly* falling into the sea, but somehow Mrs. Gillett got safe to the end of the rock, dripping and uncomfortable 'tis true; but she gained her boat, and put out to sea, the oars at full play, and the sail at the prow, like snow in the sun, all 'taut,' as sailors say, and 'bellying out' gallantly before the wind. To sum up her character in a few words, she was the essence of a thousand weathercocks infused into one. Even Minnie owned a sort of deference for this busily employed dame; but this was scarcely to be wondered at, it had grown up with her, and been originally engrafted on her childish mind by means common and pleasant to childhood—namely, sweetmeats and sugar-plums. Mrs. Gillett had the very snuggest housekeeper's room in the world, looking into the extensive kitchen-gardens at the back of the hall, and thither flocked her votaries. She was a woman of nearly sixty, but robust

and active; no modern fashion had disturbed her style of dress; her 'gownd,' as she still termed it, was three-quarters high, the gathers behind were set out by what oldfashioned ladies term 'a pad,' that is, a thing like a quarter of a yard cut off a sand-bag at the bottom of a door; the whitest muslin handkerchief in the world was pinned across her well-conditioned bust, confined close to the throat by a brooch set round with pearls, containing a lock of the defunct Mr. Gillett's hair; her cap was of lace like snow, high-crowned, ribbonless, but with broad lace strings pinned *exactly* in the centre by another brooch smaller than the first—a sort of a hoop, the first, as she told every one, that she had ever possessed. Storr and Mortimer might not admire it, but she did. A white apron completed this attire, not a Frenchified thing with pockets, but a genuine old English one, gored and sloped, perfectly tight all round. As she sat in her high-backed chair giving audience to her visiters, she was a picture. She was the only person who had advocated the cause of matrimony to Juvenal—it was dreadful to her the idea of the old place passing away to another branch of the family. When her bones had been more capable of locomotion, she had visited all the neighbouring housekeepers for miles, on some pretext or another, to find a wife for Juvenal—but in vain. His bent was not matrimony for himself, and he cared but little who should inhabit Gatestone after his death. His sisters were strangely indifferent, too; they did not like the place especially, and, should they survive him, proposed residing on a small property of their own near

Scarborough. Thus all their united energies were directed towards the settlement of their niece. She was their plaything, just as her poor mother had been eighteen years before. Mrs. Gillett's advice was perfectly conscientious when given; she only thought of the immediate case before her, without reference to any other prior claim which might have been made on her attention. Unlike Lot's wife, she never looked back; consequently, had all followed her counsel, a strange confusion would necessarily have ensued, where *all* were bent on the same thing—to marry Minnie, and each to his or her favourite. She sat in state, her hands crossed over her portly figure as she leaned back in her chair, and before her sat Juvenal.

CHAPTER III.

"JUST so, Mrs. Gillett," he said; "just as you say. I am *not* treated like the master in my own house; no one consults or obeys me. As for my niece, she opposes me in every possible way!"

"Oh! that's a pity, I'm sure," said the commiserating listener, shaking her head; "that shouldn't be, you know: it's very wrong."

"So I tell her," continued he, "but she persists in it, and unhesitatingly insults Marmaduke Burton before my face—something about some trees; I don't exactly know what she meant, but *he* did, and walked away quite offended."

"Trees?" asked Gillett, musingly; "trees? Ay, that must be it! When Squire Burton came to the property, he was much in debt, they said, and he cut down a lot of fine old oaks about the place: don't you call it to mind, sir?"

"To be sure I do," he answered, his hair almost on end at this solution of Minnie's riddle—"What a wicked thing for a girl of her age to say, on purpose to hurt his feelings, and I was so anxious for the match!"

"I've always remarked," rejoined his companion,

dropping her words one by one sententiously, "that the children of military men have more devil in them than others, more quarrelsome-like; depend upon it, 'tis what they're brought up with." She spoke as if they were young cannibals, fed upon the trophies of war around a blazing fire; as, says an old song there, "Where my forefathers feasted on the blood of Christians."

"Very likely!" ejaculated Juvenal, who was growing prosy and stultified by her reasonings, and his own over-thinking.

"And yet her father was a poor, maimed, one-armed man after all, not at all like a soldier. I often wondered how Baby, poor child, could love him!"

Juvenal evidently thought that a son of Mars should, literally and of necessity, be a man of *arms*. "But what's to be done with Minnie?" he uttered thoughtfully. "It would be very dreadful were she to marry the poor curate, or even the lawyer; for her own fortune is a mere trifle. Almost all her mother's portion was spent in paying off Dalzell's debts. I am living, and am obliged to live, quite up to my income; her aunts can give her nothing until their death. What is to be done, Mrs. Gillett? pray, advise me how to act?"

"I'd lock her up," whispered Gillett, "and not let her see any one else."

"But myself?" he asked; "what good would that do?"

"No, not you—the squire. Don't let her go about with her aunts. One wants the lawyer to have her; t'other, the parson. Lock her up; it's just the way to tame a high spirit, and make her like the man!"

"Well, so I've thought too, Mrs. Gillett, but there would be a dreadful outcry were I to attempt it. How is it to be done?"

"Well, give her, say a month, to decide; and if she don't say Yes, then do it, and she'll soon come to. You are her guardian, and have a right to know what's best for her."

"So I will! so I will! your reasoning is most excellent; but don't give a hint to my sisters, or I shall have my scheme frustrated."

"Not for the world, sir; and I again beg of you not to name *my* advice to any one, or I shall lose all the confidence of the others."

"Rest perfectly satisfied, Mrs. Gillett; I have too sincere a respect for your excellent counsels, to risk the loss of them owing to any fault of mine;" and he whispered, rising, "Don't let any of them know I have consulted you."

This the dame cheerfully promised, and she faithfully kept her word. To do her justice, Mrs. Gillett meant no harm—far from it. If, in the almost torpid indifference of her heart towards others, there arose sometimes another feeling, it was certainly to do good, not evil; but there was predominant above all else, the love, the ambition of domination, that heaven to the narrow-minded—she held the reins of government of all; this was her glory, not calculating, or indeed caring, how obtained; she was an unconsciously dangerous woman—in her heart meaning no harm, certainly. Juvenal quitted her, resolved to watch for and seize the first

excuse given, to coerce Minnie to his wishes; and a more erring path a man never selected. Minnie would do any thing—might have been induced to take any step (not faulty), by kindness, or from affection; but her spirit was of that nature which would make her stoutly rebel against oppression. Mrs. Gillett smoothed her white apron, puckered up her mouth, folded one hand over the other, and composed herself to take her afternoon's nap; and Juvenal walked away, strengthened in mind by his counsellor's advice, and like a galvanic battery, full charged, prepared to electrify poor Minnie the first moment they came in contact. In this state of affairs days went by: Juvenal watched in vain for open rebellion; his niece was too well occupied elsewhere, to give herself the trouble of opposing any attention the squire might choose to pay her. When our minds are fixed upon one object, minor things (even if they, under other circumstances, would be considered evils) pass us by almost unnoticed. However, the squire had paid only hurried visits to Gatestone since the day we last saw him there: he seemed pre-occupied about something, and this apparent coolness on his part, agonized Juvenal, who revenged himself by persecuting Minnie, and interrupting every conversation, with either the lawyer or curate, which he fancied possibly agreeable to her. But she, with perfect indifference, smiled on, unruffled and gay. Minnie had something better at heart. We have said she was a little self-willed; and not all the angry expostulations of Sylvia, who had discovered it, could

prevent her visiting the cottage of Mary Burns, who now was enabled to quit her bed. Accompanied by Dorcas, she went thither almost every day, to speak comfort to, and fortify that unhappy girl in her good resolutions. Dorcas was one of those sensible women, who, though they would not plunge a young, pure mind in impurity, or familiarize it with crime, yet deem it right and healthful to teach it the beauty of virtue by its comparison with error, guardedly, advisedly, but practically shown. Moreover, in this case it was a duty, and that Dorcas inculcated above all else, to succour and strengthen those in affliction or temptation. Poor Mary forbore to name her seducer, neither did either seek to unveil this hidden corner of her heart: the wrong had been done—how could it alter the case to know his name? The poor girl said, "Oh, when I knew he had deceived, and never meant to marry me—when he told me so, coldly and scornfully, I became mad; for that I must have been, to seek death in my sin!" Then she told Minnie how she had been brought up, almost entirely, for years at the manor-house, while Madame Tremenhere (so she called her) lived: but this seemed wrung from her heart; for, with the words, the clenched hands stiffened, so bitterly she wrung them, and her lip sternly compressed itself together, to keep back her tears. She was a girl of manners and bearing far superior to her station; not decidedly pretty, but quiet, well-looking, and far above what is termed "genteel." She was ladylike in tone and manner, showing evidence of gentle

teaching and association. Her mother had once kept the village school; and when she became paralyzed, years before, Mary had supported her by her work, plain and fancy, which she disposed of in the neighbouring town, Harrogate, some six miles distant. She was, at the time our tale commences, in her twenty-fifth year. Dorcas had taken a deep interest in this girl, and was endeavouring, through some friends in London, to obtain a situation there for her, whither she might remove with her poor old unconscious mother. Juvenal could not lock up Minnie, as Mrs. Gillett had advised him to do, for visiting this lonely cottage, however much against his wishes, because Dorcas was a consenting party: he could but grumble, and consult with his old crony, the housekeeper, who advised him to bide his time; and he too felt, at her foretelling, that that would soon come. "The Countess of Ripley and Lady Dora will shortly arrive," she said, "and then Miss Minnie can't run about as she does." He felt this, too, and waited. But, in the mean time, his refractory niece sped almost daily to the Burns's cottage, where, not unfrequently, her young, fresh voice paused in its gentle, though almost childish, counsellings, or readings, to salute Mr. Skaife, who came also to visit his poor parishioner; and (truth must be spoken) a little self-interest attached itself to his visits, for he was almost certain of meeting the one he sought and loved there. One day they met as usual: Minnie was alone, Dorcas had not accompanied her: he had preceded her in his arrival. When she entered the cottage she found

much tribulation there. Evidently, Mr. Skaife was in the confidence of Mary Burns; it was natural he should be, as the one who had rescued her from so fearful a death, and also, as her spiritual master, one she was bound to respect. Minnie found the unhappy girl in a state of the most fearful excitement. Acting upon what he had said, of their being improper characters, an order had been brought them that morning by the squire's steward, to quit the cottage of which he was landlord as soon as possible. It seemed almost beyond the power of Mr. Skaife to control the girl's emotion to the standard of reason. When Minnie entered, Mary stood before her pale and speechless: she stood—yet she seemed almost incapable of supporting the weight of her body, and, still greater than that, some heavy affliction. For some moments she could not reply to the other's kind question of, "What had occurred?" Mr. Skaife hastened to reply:—

"Oh!" he said hastily, fixing his eye on the girl to subdue her bursting feelings, as if he dreaded her giving utterance to something; "Mr. Burton deems it advisable another tenant should have this cottage, and 'tis best thus; Mary must leave; absence from this place is necessary, for many reasons. I have seen Miss Dorcas this morning, and she tells me she has succeeded in obtaining an employment for this poor girl in town, where she can support her mother, and in more healthful scenes and occupations redeem the past, and forget——"

"Forget!" she almost shrieked; "forget! and *now* to-day, when I am ordered away, and by——"

"Hush!" interrupted the curate sternly; "remember you are called upon to suffer; you have purchased that right, however cruelly administered to you; it is only by pain inflicted that physicians heal."

"Forgive me, Mr. Skaife," she cried, in a scarcely audible tone; I have merited all, but I am only human, and it is very hard to bring down the spirit to subjection, more especially in my case, when——"

"Hush!" he said again; and Minnie felt that her presence silenced the girl's speech.

"And must you leave this soon?" asked Minnie; "before my aunt has arranged all for your departure?"

"Yes," uttered Mary, through her half-closed teeth; "we are ordered to quit now—at once—to-day!" and, despite her efforts, the excitement of her previous manner again overcame her. "I am very wicked," she said at last, in deep affliction and humility, "for I have deserved all; but oh! Miss Dalzell, may Heaven keep you from ever suffering—though innocent, as you must be, with your strong, pure mind—what I am enduring; even guilty as I am, it is almost more than mere human force can bear up against."

"You have a kind, good friend here," answered Minnie, looking up in Mr. Skaife's face; one whose guidance has led you to better and surer hopes than those you had relied upon. Think of this, and be comforted. You will soon leave this, and meanwhile you shall not quit this cottage; *I* will ask Mr. Burton to permit you to remain; surely his steward acts without his concurrence, and when he knows this man's order, he will——"

"He!" cried Mary; "he, Mar——, Mr. Burton, I mean!"

"Pray, Miss Dalzell," exclaimed Mr. Skaife hastily, "drop this painful subject—oblige me; leave all to me; and if I may without rudeness ask it, abridge your visit to-day. I will see you this evening, and inform you where this poor girl is removed to, for leave this she must."

"Then I will go now," answered Minnie, moving towards the door. "May I——"

Before she could conclude her sentence, the cottage door was hastily pushed open, and a man entered. Mary uttered a wild scream of surprise, and, springing forward, grasped his hand in both of hers. "Miles," she cried, as if doubting her sense of vision. "Miles, you, you here!—forgive me," she uttered, dropping his hand, as if it blistered hers in the contact, and, stepping back, "I forget myself always *now*, Mr. Tremenhere. Oh, Heavens!" And she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"Miles—Miles still and ever—dear Mary!" exclaimed the man, putting his arms around her fondly, and drawing her on his breast, quite unconscious of, or indifferent to all observers. "Still, my girl, as when a better than any now on earth sanctioned it." And his voice trembled, yet it was a fine manly one too, and in keeping with the speaker's appearance. He was tall, very tall, muscular in frame, but slight, dark-haired, with dark earnest eyes; a rather projecting but perfect brow gave more depth to them—it was shade above their intense

fire; an aquiline nose of chiselled outline, a mouth compressed and firm; all combined, made Miles Tremenhere a portrait worthy the pencil of the most scrupulous of the old masters. He was quite Spanish in style; for a complexion dark and bronzed, gave colouring to that face of wild, half-savage beauty, from its daring, haughty expression. A thick, dark moustache curled down either side of the mouth, veiling, but not concealing, the line of its speaking firmness, even in silence. He appeared quite unconscious of the presence of any one but Mary, like a man accustomed to be alone and friendless in a crowd. Minnie looked at him, in wonder at first at a manly beauty she might have dreamed of, but never saw before; then a sensation of bitter pain came over her, succeeded by the glow of maiden shame when first brought in contact with guilt; for she fancied Mary's seducer before her, and she felt shame for one of her sex who could thus daringly avow it, as Mary's action seemed to do; she made an effort to creep away, then turning her eyes towards Mr. Skaife, expecting to see reprehension or anger on his countenance, she beheld a quiet, benevolent smile cross his expressive, but not handsome, face. She stopped, feeling in an instant that Mr. Tremenhere could not be the one who had wronged the girl, for him to look thus. "Mary," continued Miles, still holding her in his arms. "What dreadful thing is this I hear? I only arrived in this neighbourhood yesterday night, and Weld, my ever true friend, told me, to my horror, that you had been rescued from death by some one. What, Mary, has your fine spirit become so

daunted, that a little poverty could grind it down to despair? Shame on you, my girl! You told me, when things changed at the old place, that poverty should not quell *you;* you bade me cheer up, and look to you for courage. Is this your practice of that excellent theory, Mary?"

While he was speaking, her head gradually turned from his gaze; in vain he tried to force her eyes to meet his; she held her face downwards, and, shrinking from his arms, dropped on her knees, bowed to earth in bitterness, worse than any death could have been; she had yet to teach this noble heart to despise her. What could death be compared with that? He tried to raise her. "Come," he said with the gentleness of a woman, "I did not mean to scold you; never be cast down with a few rough words from a rough fellow like myself."

A hand was on his arm; he started, so forgetful had he become of all around, seeing only her, for her poor old mother sat in an arm-chair, perfectly unconscious to all around in hearing, and stone blind—Miles turned hastily—the smile had changed to a frown. "Mr. Tremenhere," said Skaife, for 'twas his touch upon him, "do not let me startle or alarm you," he hurriedly added, feeling the start.

"Sir!" exclaimed the other proudly, "I neither know fear nor timidity," and he shook his arm free from the clasp.

"You mistake me," answered Skaife calmly; "though a stranger to you, from report I well know, that, but—"

he hesitated a moment in confusion, not well knowing how to continue.

The poor girl came to his aid, rising slowly, whilst her knees trembled beneath her from emotion. She advanced a step; her first impulse of rushing into Miles's arms was passed, and now she durst not touch even his hand, but stood, and with a waive of her hand motioned to Skaife.

"Miles," she said, "that is our curate, good, kind Mr. Skaife. But for him, my poor mother would now have been childless, and probably in the workhouse—*he* rescued me!" At the thought of her old mother, paralyzed, deaf, and blind, in that spectre-house of misery, the tears dropped from her eyes, which were strained wide open, to try and see through that crowding flood of despair.

"I seldom offer my hand," exclaimed Tremenhere, at the same time extending his towards Skaife, "it has been so often repulsed; but take it now in warm thanks for what your have done for one, almost a sister."

All coldness and pride were banished from that fine noble face; his every feature lit up with the rich, bland smile, which left you almost speechless with admiration, so exalted the expression became. Two worthy of each other in heart and mind clasped hands warmly, and looking in Skaife's face, Miles, whose wrongs had made him a keen observer of countenance, ever dreading an enemy, with his hand gave a feeling of friendship which time well matured.

"Now, I remember," he added, "Weld spoke of your

kindness; but my brain was so bewildered I had forgotten it, and other harsh events to deal with, prevented my coming over here last night, as I was assured of Mary's safety by my good farmer friend where I am staying."

"And now," said Skaife looking expressively at him, "will you accompany me a short distance, merely across a couple of fields, whilst I offer my protection as far as her own grounds, to Miss Dalzell." And he turned to where Minnie stood, almost concealed by the curtains of the humble bed.

"Miss Dalzell!" exclaimed Tremenhere; and again the first haughty expression mantled his face with scorn. "Allow me to use the privilege of my calling," said Skaife, "and take upon me what, as another, I might not dare assume—the liberty of presenting you to one another,—Miss Dalzell, Mr. Tremenhere."

The latter raised his hat coldly, but respectfully, yet he seemed annoyed at the meeting.

"Honour Miss Dalzell, for *my* sake," whispered poor Mary, well knowing why he looked so troubled; "for she has come here day after day, as an angel, to visit a suffering creature, and bring balm to a wretched sinner." The last word was unheard by Miles; he stood beside Minnie, whose face was covered by a deep blush.

"This," he said, "has been a day of much surprise, if of sorrow too; I came, expecting every hand and heart against me—every hand cold, every heart stone; I have met two generous ones, or faces are sad traitors. Forgive me, Miss Dalzell, but in your home, the bitterest

against me, the almost dwelling-place of Marmaduke Burton, my *worthy* cousin, I scarcely expected to find a bosom with human blood in it; a thousand, and a thousand thanks for Mary's sake."

"Mr. Tremenhere has been intimate with my thoughts for some time," answered Minnie more calmly, "and believe me as friend, not foe."

"Indeed!" and a bright glowing look was fixed in her face, "I never dreamed of a personal friend at Gatestone, even in thought. This is truly the prodigal's welcome home! May I accompany you and Mr. Skaife across the two fields he named? I know them well! I may? Thank you; Mary!"—He turned to the poor girl, and his face saddened as he approached her, for she was weeping bitterly; the very floor seemed to tremble with her emotion, as Skaife whispered lowly to her—"Mary, I will return soon—soon, my girl; don't be so cast down, better times will come for all. Hope, Mary; *I* do to-day," and he grasped her reluctant hand, "just a few moments, and I will return."

Skaife whispered, "Remember your solemn promise to me, to Heaven. He *must* know all; cheer up, poor girl, I am sure he will only feel *pity* for you!" *Only* pity where we were once loved and respected, is indeed an icedrop on a burning surface, soon passed away, soon absorbed, and not long even the memory of it left.

Minnie, Tremenhere, and Skaife, passed out.

CHAPTER IV.

TREMENHERE had two distinct characters; with those he disliked, he had more than the coldness ascribed to Englishmen in general; there was something almost despotic in his manner. With those to whom his affections kindled, he was not alone gentleness itself, but forbearing, bending, loving, the almost habitual frown quitted his face, and left it youthful, bland, and joyous in expression. Poor Miles! he had suffered, and been made to endure, keenly; he had been forced to graft suspicion on a noble nature, and this destroyed the bud of much good fruit. There was so much wild nature about him, that not unfrequently the usages of society suffered from his bluntness; what he thought, he spoke freely.

"Miss Dalzell knows, I presume," he said, as the three entered the path-field, "my history—as I was—as I am?"

"But slightly," she answered, rather embarrassed.

"Well, 'tis best, perhaps, little known to one so young and pure as yourself. It would show you a capability of vice in the human heart, which you may never discover in your personal career—so better ignore it; it might, too, tarnish your mind's purity, to see so dark a current in

a life's ocean; but what I wished to allude to, is this, when I first saw you, and heard your name mentioned, it recalled you to me as one whom I have recently heard of as the elected bride of my hopeful cousin, Marmaduke Burton. My first thought of you was darker than dislike—'twas contempt; no good, true heart could love that man for himself."

"Stop, Mr. Tremenhere," cried Skaife hastily, and in evidently painful emotion. "Do not judge harshly what woman's weakness or love may lead her to forget, or forgive, for herself or another."

"Good heavens, Mr. Skaife!" cried Minnie, amazed and in almost horror; "what do you suppose?"

Skaife had forgotten her, he was thinking of another. Tremenhere stopped suddenly, and flushed deeply, as he fixed his earnest eyes on her—

"Have I, can I have been mistaken? Has my own wary judgment in general, deceived me this once? I thought," he almost uttered these last words to himself, "no one could cheat my watchfulness now."

"Mr. Tremenhere," exclaimed she in much embarrassment, yet anxious to cast from her a garment so hateful as the one which should cloak her as Burton's wife in his or any eyes, "I may be speaking boldly for a girl, and to you, a stranger too, but I would not have any one suppose, much less you, an injured man, that I can ever become your cousin's wife. Mr. Skaife, pray assure Mr. Tremenhere you did not allude to me!"

"Indeed," said Skaife, much puzzled by his own awk-

wardness, "I had forgotten all present; I will explain my meaning to you," and he turned to Miles.

"Oh!" answered this man again, reassured in confidence, and smiling his own peculiar smile on Minnie. "I ill deserve this kindness, this haste to soothe my wounds. Believe me, they are deep and cankering when I think of Burton, not for myself, but another. You have been so Christian in kindness to poor Mary, that I could not bear, Miss Dalzell, to associate any one I respected in even my thoughts with that traitor. Thought," he continued, musingly, "is a gift of the soul; you will inhabit mine, linked with that unfortunate girl, whom I much love."

"Am I to understand," asked Skaife aside to him in surprise, "that you know all?"

"All?" and the other stared, astonished at the question to himself. "Could any know it better? what else has again brought me to this place? what drove me from it?"

"Then, indeed, you are to be pitied, Mr. Tremenhere—deeply pitied; but I feared something of this, from your emotion in the humble cottage we have quitted."

Skaife was playing with shadows of his own creating. He fancied Tremenhere loved Mary, with whom he had been brought up from childhood; and he also thought he (Tremenhere) knew all her painful story. Skaife's last words demanded an explanation. Before the other could ask it, Minnie uttered an exclamation, and over

the stile, the last one, near which they stood, struggled Mrs. Gillett—for struggle it was—whether she should overcome the stile, or the stile lay her in the ditch. However, she arrived safely on the side where stood the the three, smoothed her dress, settled her apron, picked up a patten which she had dropped (she always carried these, even in the finest weather, to cross the brooks on,) and then she looked up over her spectacles, which were on the tip of her nose, and stood transfixed. At a glance she knew Miles Tremenhere. Mrs. Gillett had one excellent quality—she was no talebearer; she kept circumstances to herself; they only oozed out in imperceptible drops in her counsellings, making her seem an Œdipus for soothsaying and guessing. Her hearers were amazed when truths came to light which she had foretold, without any seeming foreknowledge of them: herein lay her strength and power over all. "Mussiful powers!" she mentally said; "here's a pretty business! What am I to do with *him?*" She was thinking of all the lovers for Minnie she had already on hand, with their leaders. Skaife was the first to recover self-possession. "Perhaps, Miss Dalzell," he said, "you will allow me"—he did not say "us," for Mrs. Gillett was, perhaps, ignorant who Tremenhere was; he might seem as a stranger to Minnie in her eyes—"to hand over my escort, however unwillingly done, to Mrs. Gillett; and I and my friend (he glanced at Miles) will continue our walk of business."

But Tremenhere stepped boldly forward; something more than his usual candour forbade disguise, even if

practicable: "Mrs. Gillett," he said, "you and I are old friends. Surely you remember the 'sweet youth,' as you were used to call me when I visited Gatestone and your cosey room there!"

Mrs. Gillett shrunk back—she was on her slippery rock: had they been alone, she would gladly have spoken to Miles, before witnesses she durst not. She looked down, and, affecting not to hear, stooped, resting on one toe to support her knee, on which, placing a patten, she very assiduously begun tying its string. Miles laughed aloud: it was a cold, contemptuous, unpained laugh. "Miss Dalzell," he said, lowly bowing, and changing his tone to one of feeling, "I do indeed thank you for to-day, for all your gentle words. Whenever I revisit this spot, here shall I pause to salute the shade of one whose kindness will be ever present with me." He was turning sadly away: "Good bye, Mr. Tremenhere," she cried, extending her hand; "and when we meet again, may you be very differently circumstanced to what you are to-day."

He grasped her hand, and all the speeches ever formed could not have been half so eloquent, as his tremulous "I thank you deeply and sincerely, may your kind wish be heard;" and with a sigh, which we often grant to sympathy, though refusing it to our own hardened feelings, he turned away with Skaife, who shook Minnie kindly by the hand; it was a parting of three very kindred spirits. As they walked off, Mrs Gillett rose from her occupation. "Your dear aunts sent me to meet you, darling," she said, glancing round cautiously, "and I always like to bring

my pattens with me; I don't like damp grass, it don't agree with my rheumatics." At that moment Tremenhere paused in his walk, and turned round, as if irresolute whether to return, and perhaps say something left unsaid. Mrs Gillett saw it, and, once more stooping, she gave a violent tug to her patten string; she had raised herself three inches upon those kind of young stilts, which even yet oldfashioned country folks wear. "Bless the tie!" she cried, bent nearly double, her back curved like a boy at leap-frog; "bless the tie, it always comes undone, or gets into a knot—I never see such strings!" Minnie saw nothing of this; she could not have comprehended Mrs Gillett's policy; then, too, her thoughts were more knotted than even the patten tie;—who might unweave and straighten them? Alas! a few moments will often entangle the skein of our existence, knotting up hopes, fears, and cares, in one unravelable mass. Tremenhere turned, and walked on; Minnie had seen the action, and it troubled her, "What had he wished to say? would he tell Skaife? could she serve him in any way? poor fellow—poor Miles Tremenhere!" Every one knows the reputed relationship between friendship and love; they have a family likeness, and are not unfrequently mistaken for one another, till the latter pirouettes, and then we find the arrowless quiver, (*they* remain with us,) and the extended wings,—who may clip them?

"Your aunts were very anxious about you," continued Minnie's companion, peering over her spectacles to read if the other had read *her*; "poor, dear ladies, I'm sure it's a great blessing for you to have such relations in your

orphan state; and then your kind uncle, too, he is more sensible, and judges better what's good for you than any, as in course he should—in course he should," here she paused, and peeped at the thoughtful girl. "The lawyer Mr. Dalby's very well," ran on Mrs. Gillett, "and so is Mr. Skaife—oh, he's a pious young man! and his sermons are quite edifying; but then, I've always remarked, your very pious young men don't make *very* good husbands, or happy homes. A man should only think of his wife, and how can the clargy do that when they're the fathers of the whole parish? and I'm sure Mr. Skaife has enough to do hereabouts, for they are an ill broughtened-up set as ever I met with, and, as his housekeeper says, when he isn't writin' his sermons, he's *astonishing* some one," (*query*, admonishing?) "Now, as to marrying him, with all his occupation, it might do very well for Miss Sylvia, or Miss Dorcas, but for a fine young lady like you, why, you should have horses, and carriages, and servants at command, and be the grandest lady in the neighbourhood. Then, as for Mr. Dalby, why, what with lat*tycats*, *re*jectments, and briefs, it's but little time *he'd* find to pay you proper attention."

"Mrs. Gillett!" exclaimed Minnie, so suddenly that she almost frightened her off her pattens, "don't you know Mr. Tremenhere? didn't you know him as a boy?"

"Bless me, Miss Minnie, what *are* you talking of! don't speak of that dreadful young man, Miss; it's unbecoming a modest young lady to know there's such a person living."

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"Mrs. Gillett!" and the girl stood still in amazement.

"To be sure," responded the woman, "he must be a bad character—wasn't his mother? and how could he be good?—Don't a cat always have kittens?"

"Mrs. Gillett," cried Minnie, again grasping her arm, and her eyes looked deepest violet with emotion. "You would be a very wicked woman to think what you say; that was Miles Tremenhere with Mr. Skaife. I pitied him before knowing him, and now, if I could by any means see him righted, I'd lend my hand to the good work, and I do hope some day he may be at the manor-house again!"

"That Mr. Tremenhere!" exclaimed the politic Gillett. "How boys *do* alter, to be sure!" She evaded replying to the other things said; it would not do, too decidedly, to take any side of the question; the womb of Time is very prolific—we never know what offspring it may produce. They were in the shrubberies of Gatestone by this time; a few moments' silence ensued, interrupted only by the click-clack of Mrs. Gillett's pattens.

"Mrs. Gillett, why will you wear those horrid things on the gravel walks? you cut them up terribly," said a voice behind them. Minnie turned, her companion stopped, and stooped to disencumber her feet of their appendages, by which movement Juvenal nearly fell over her. She was pitched forward on her hands and knees by the concussion, with a scream; another picked her up—'twas the squire. Juvenal was evidently cross, or he would

not have spoken so disrespectfully to his matron housekeeper.

"I hope I see Miss Dalzell well?" said Burton, offering his hand.

"Well, thank you," answered she, not appearing to notice it—he bit his lip, and dropped beside her.

"I really should like to know where you go every day—where you have been this morning, Minnie?" asked her uncle crossly.

"Shall I tell you, uncle?" she answered, and then, without giving herself a moment to consider possible consequences to herself or others, with the too hasty candour of a generous mind anxious to espouse the weaker side, she continued, addressing herself this time to Marmaduke Burton,—"I've been to Mary Burns's cottage, and there I met Mr. Skaife, and your cousin, Mr. Burton, Mr. Tremenhere." Certainly she created an effect; the squire tottered and became ghastly pale, Juvenal looked amazed and annoyed. "What—together?" he cried. "How came that about? Where is Mr. Tremenhere? and how dare you become acquainted with that man?"

"Your surprise equals mine," said Burton, recovering himself partially, then added ironically—"Our young curate might do better composing his sermons, than becoming bear-leader to an impostor, and a man of Mr. Tremenhere's character. As *cousin*, Miss Dalzell, allow me to disavow him; he is none such by law, and I have no desire to outstep any bounds to claim that enviable distinction."

"I only judge the law of humanity," she replied, in a slightly tremulous tone; she began to be afraid of the storm of such passions as his face bespoke working in his frame. "And no man should be condemned for the faults—if faults there were—of his parents."

"If faults there were," said Burton, echoing her words. "Allow me, Miss Dalzell, to reject, in all politeness, the right your speech offers me, of standing in Mr. Tremenhere's position. He or I am an impostor, a claimant to an unjust title of proprietorship; besides, there are more personal faults appertaining to that gentleman, at variance with my ideas of honour."

For an instant a doubt crossed her mind about Mary and Miles; could Burton allude to this? But her heart repudiated the thought.

"Did he become suddenly so wicked?" she calmly asked. "As boys together—as men, indeed—up to the period of his father's death, had he the deep hypocrisy to conceal all this?"

"Miss Dalzell seems well informed of my history," he said, through his half-closed teeth. "I cannot but feel flattered by the kind interest it evinces in me." He bowed low.

"Really, Minnie," said her uncle, "you have chosen a strange subject; pray, drop it. How could you have become acquainted with that man? This comes of your running about alone—it must be seen to, and quickly: Mrs. Gillett!" The woman stepped forward at his call; and now she blessed her forethought and policy in having ignored Tremenhere's identity!

"Mrs. Gillett,' said her master, while the other two walked on in silence, "what do you know about this? You were with Miss Dalzell: where did you find her, and how?" The woman was quite calm under this criminal examination—she felt so sure of her innocence.

"I know nothing of it, master," she said decidedly: "I met Miss Dalzell, dear child, in the holly field; just as I stepped over the stile, my patten came undone; I was busy settling it; I saw Mr. Skaife and another gentleman, but I'm sure I couldn't swear to him; I never looked in his face—it isn't my custom so to do to them above me, 'specially gentlemen!" and she smoothed her virginal-looking apron, tied over her modest heart with wide tape strings.

Sylvia and Dorcas came out to meet the approaching group. "Where was the child?" demanded the former at the top of her voice. Juvenal looked, and was, much excited. "Mrs. Gillett found her," he replied, "with an improper—a most improper—character!"

"What a dreadful thing!" screamed Sylvia; "who was it?"

Dorcas was by the girl's side, calmly speaking, and inquiring the cause of her protracted stay, which had alarmed them. She knew, however, that Miunie was not in any wilful harm, yet her affection made her fearful of ill. We will leave them to their explanations, to which Mr. Burton was not a witness, having taken his leave hastily of all. Poor Minnie had a sad trial, and a severe lesson and lecture, the consequences of her warm heart and candour—two things, bad guides in this world

of brambles; with these her garments would be, haplessly, frequently rent and disfigured.

We will ask our readers to step into the holly field with us, to where we left Skaife and Miles Tremenhere, both of them walking back in deep thought.

CHAPTER V.

FROM some ambiguous words dropped by Miles in the cottage, and during Minnie's stay with them, it will be remembered that Skaife was impressed with the idea that Tremenhere had, as a boy probably, loved Mary Burns, who had been a *protegée* of his mother's at the manor-house; and the curate also thought that the other was aware of her sad fate. For some time the silence was unbroken, then Miles, suddenly turning towards his companion, said, like one awakening from a dream, "Pardon me, Mr. Skaife, but I am an uncouth man, much alone, little in humanized society; my chief companions are stocks and stones, and the native inhabitants of wild nature; forgive me again, I had forgotten to thank you, which I do most sincerely, for your kindness to poor Mary Burns, and also to myself personally; few, indeed, would have had the courage to notice, and be thus publicly seen with one at so low a discount as I am in this neighbourhood."

"Believe me sincere, when I assure you, Mr. Tremenhere," rejoined the other, "that from all I have heard, and now seen, no one can more truly deplore your misfortunes than I do."

"Do you know them all?"

"I think, I believe I do," hesitated the curate; he feared uttering something painful.

"Do you know that for upwards of twenty-one years I was brought up at the manor-house, beloved by a father and mother, the best Heaven ever formed—oh! especially the latter; I can scarcely speak of her now." He paused, and seemed choking with emotion. "To be brief," he continued, after a pause, "in one year I lost all; she died first, my father soon followed her, and then, while my sorrow was still green, my cousin, Marmaduke Burton, put in a claim for the property, on the ground of my illegitimacy! I was stricken, I had not a word to offer, proof I had none to the contrary; my father's marriage had taken place, for *marriage there was*, at Gibraltar; my mother was Spanish, of not exalted parentage, I believe, —from thence sprung the great difficulty of proof. Only an obscure family to deal with, that ruffian Marmaduke gained all—the property was tied up until the event should be known; I had few wealthy friends—he, both friends and money. Most of my earlier days had passed in studies abroad; I came only at stated periods to my home—I was a stranger among my own countrymen;—he had secured himself allies (I will not call them friends, of these he could have none); he was assisted too, by a greater scamp than himself, a mean, cold-blooded villain of the name of Dalby. In my bewilderment, my horror, at *her* name—my pure, holy mother's name—being dragged forward for public scorn, I lost all nerve and power; then too, I was poor,—the result you know.

Mr. Skaife, I am a wanderer—*he*, in my halls; but all is not lost yet. I may find my way to sunlight, even like the blind mole."

"And, Mr. Burton," asked the other, hesitatingly, "was he not a frequent visiter at the manor-house?"

"Why man, the reptile was there as my friend and brother; whenever I returned from my rambles, or school, in earlier days, 'twas 'Marmaduke' and 'Miles' with us from boyhood's youngest hours; he was with me *soothing*, when she, my mother, died—and there, too, when I put on my orphan state of master and lord of the manor-house. A week afterwards the long prepared claim was put in; the morning he left for that worthy purpose, he shook me by the hand, and said as usual, 'Good bye old fellow, we shall meet soon;' and we did—*in court*."

"And it was at the manor he knew Mary Burns?" asked Skaife, deeply affected.

"Ay, at the old place she had been as companion, almost child to my mother, from her childhood. Then when her old mother became paralyzed, and lost her school, Mary went to reside with her in that cottage; but it was comfortable then. My mother, and a little of her own industry in fancy work, kept them. Alas, poor Mary! I loved her dearly, as ever man loved a sister, she was so exemplary a girl under many trials."

"I fancied," said Skaife, "I scarcely know why, but I fancied there had been a warmer attachment." To his own surprise, he found himself conversing with this al-

most stranger as with an old friend, so certain is it, that kindred souls know no time, to limit their flight to meet their fellow spirits. Tremenhere coloured even through the bronze of his dark complexion; at the last words he was silent some moments, and then said hastily, but not haughtily: "Mary was a playfellow, as a sister to me—I never loved her," and he seemed desirous of changing the subject. This proud man appreciated the other's qualities and his goodness; with him he was no longer the cold, guarded person which circumstances had made him generally in his intercourse with all.

"It is a painful subject with you, I see," said Skaife, much embarrassed how to proceed; "but my mind is greatly relieved on one point—I feared you had loved this poor girl; that not having been the case, my duty is easier, for one it is, to consult with you what had best be done for her."

"Yes, poor girl! I had for a moment lost sight of her case in other thoughts—selfish ones, too—we are such mere automatons to our ruling passions. Poor girl! I hear that hopeful cousin of mine has ordered them to quit the cottage; so I presume they must—but where go? that's the question. I am so hampered myself by other cares, I scarcely know how to help them; could he not be prevailed upon to allow them to remain another six months—what do you think?"

Skaife's blood chilled within him; he felt like a disappointed man. Here was the person who had known Mary from childhood, almost a brother, so coolly wishing her to remain on the sufferance of Marmaduke Burton, as

he knew him, and believed the other too, equally enlightened on several points.

"No," he coldly said, "I do not think she can, or ought to remain under circumstances; think of the dreadful crime she has almost committed, Mr. Tremenhere,—suicide!"

"True, but she has promised not to attempt that again. In our toiling passage to the attainment of any object, we must drink many a bitter draught. She must try and submit for a while, I fear, to a few annoyances: poor Mary—what can I do?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Tremenhere," answered Skaife in a cold but decided tone; "with *my* consent, as curate of this parish, she shall not remain. She might not commit suicide; but men are strange creatures, and the woman they cast from them to-day, they might kneel to, to-morrow, were she to appear indifferent; this girl shall never know the temptation such an act on his part might be."

Tremenhere stopped as if transfixed by a bolt of iron, and stared in speechless wonder in his companion's face. Skaife continued speaking, mistaking the dark cloud of demoniacal expression crossing that handsome face, for indignation towards himself for his free speech; for this he little cared.

"Mr. Burton's ardent, but heartless, pursuit of the girl till her ruin ensued, proves a deeper motive, I fear, than passion; the same revenge towards you, may urge——" He said no more.

"Stop!" cried Miles, in a voice of thunder, and he grasped the other's arm, and arrested his footsteps. His

whole power of utterance above a whisper seemed to have been expended in that one word; for his voice became a mere breath like a dying man's, as he asked, while that strong, robust frame tottered beneath his heart's weight in his agony, "Do I understand you aright, that Mary Burns has been seduced, and by Marmaduke Burton?"

"Alas, yes! I thought you understood so from your words in that cottage." Poor Skaife was pale with emotion; the other had not changed, his blood stood still, only the muscles had given way beneath the blow. There was a long silence; Miles still grasped his arm till it fell from that clasp at last, powerless to hold it—they were near the stile leading into the lane where Mary's cottage was situated.

"Does Miss Dalzell know this?" inquired Miles, as if one thought, rushing with the many through his brain, found an outlet.

"The ruin, but not the man," answered Skaife.

"God bless her, then!" burst from the suffering man's lips, and with that blessing the blood flowed once more through his frame. It was as a gush of molten lead, forcing its way outwards, burning as it rushed; his face became dark and lurid, and his flashing eyes looked wildly forward.

"I have not words to thank you with, for all you have done," he cried in a hoarse, unnatural voice, grasping Skaife's hand. "We shall soon, very soon, meet again;" and with one bound he cleared the stile, and almost like thought stood before the terrified Mary Burns, who

had sunk in a chair when they departed, almost fainting, from fear of the result of their conversation; and now she felt how well grounded that terror had been when Miles strode into the cottage. She knew his ungovernable passion when excited by injury or villainy in another—in her terror she rose before him: "Miles!" she almost screamed.

"Not Miles!" he cried, "but the spirit of his mother returned to condemn you; an angel who breathed on you from her own pure lip, who strove to instil her purity into your polluted soul—Devil's child!" and he grasped her trembling arm—he was pitiless, scarcely human, in his rage then—as he continued, "to hear such counsels, to breathe the atmosphere of such a presence, and turn to your hell again! Could not even her dying blessing, which fell united on both of us, cleanse you? Could you find no fitter object for your impure love than him, the man who has branded her memory with so foul a stain, who has driven her son, almost your brother, forth, a beggar, and nameless! If there's one drop of human blood in you, woman, shed it in tears for your baseness! Oh, heavens!" and he looked fixedly forward like a man in a trance, "give me power to call down on this creature the reward of her foul work!"

"Do not curse me, Miles," she shrieked, dropping on her knees and clasping them, "have mercy on me—have mercy on me!"

It was a fearful picture on which the curate at that moment looked unseen through the open door; *they*, in their agony, and the poor old mother totally unconscious

of all, some happy thoughts evidently crossing her mind, for she was smiling, and endeavouring to rub her paralyzed hands together at the joyous dream. Skaife involuntarily drew back, and leaned against the door-post to keep away other witnesses, should the voices within attract notice in the adjoining cottages. Miles's hand was passed painfully over his face and brow—he had flung his hat aside.

"Have pity, Miles!" she cried, her eyes streaming with tears which nearly choked her, as she clasped her hands, and kneeling, looked up to where he stood, for he had shaken her off as she clung to him. "But if you knew what dreadful struggles of nearly maddening power ground my heart down to bitterness, and *revenge*," (she almost whispered the last word,) "before I committed this fearful sin against myself, *you*, and, far more than all, the memory of your sainted mother, you might find some excuse. You cannot forget how my presumptuous heart, forgetting all but her more than woman's kindness, dared to lose sight, from her gentleness, of the distance between us, and loved you. You cannot forget the day I dreamed you returned it, and boldly confessed mine; you were calm, dignified, manly, and generous, when you said you never could return it—that I had mistaken you, and you hoped myself, and when you drew me to your heart with a *brother's* love—Oh, may you never know such humiliation as *I* felt then, which turned to a blacker feeling afterwards, fostered by him; for when you, for my sake, absented yourself from home for months, you cannot know how this weak heart was

worked upon by *him*. He had seen all, guessed all; and, unsuspecting his motives, I one day confessed the truth to him. From that hour he became the friend, the comforter; he alone spoke hope to me—a hope his every action discredited faith in. Then your mother died; events were drawing to a close; you returned, no thought of love in your heart; I repressed my mad affection for you, but I was weighed to earth by the effort. I was but a girl of eighteen in a villain's hands, when the downfall of all came; your father's death, your banishment——"

"And did not all these sad events, Mary," and his voice was low and trembling as he looked down upon the cowering woman, "soften your heart to pity, not revenge? Our affections are not our own; we are not masters of these but by many a hard struggle. I never could have loved you more than as a sister: it was not pride, Mary; we have none of that with those we love. I loved you very truly for your own sake, for the sake of our happy days of childhood together, and for my mother's sake." As the last words fell from him, the man, for a moment spirit-broken and agonized, sunk down on a chair, and, leaning his head on his arm across the table, wept like any woman over the ruin before him, and his memory of another. He had not one selfish thought; he was iron for himself, —for others, as a child at heart in love and gentleness. She rose, and, creeping to his side, took the hand which, clenched in its agony, rested on his knee, and, dropping on hers, she covered it with tears and kisses. "Forgive

me, Miles," she sobbed, "for you know not all I endured of trial before I fell. He told me you had scoffed at my love—to him. It was not the work of a day or hour; it is nearly eight long years since you quitted this place; for more than four we have not met; for less than that space I have been the guilty creature I now am!"

Insensibly his hand unclenched and clasped her's; she continued sobbing between each scarcely-articulate word, "When, by every artifice man could employ, he led me to error; and, ever since, this most bitter repentance. 'Twas done under the promise of making me his wife, to show *you* that *he* appreciated my worth. And when he said you not only had repulsed my love, but scorned it——"

"He lied, Mary, he lied!" articulated the sorrowing man, looking up; "from *me* he never heard of our love; he must have divined it."

"God help me!" she uttered, kissing his clasping hand, "for I have suffered much; and it was my refusal (for years now) to continue in my error, which has made him persecute me so of late. I told him last time we met, that *I loved you still, and ever should.*" These last words were scarcely breathed.

"Heaven help you, my poor girl!" cried Miles, looking at her as he placed a hand gently on her head; "for what can that love bring you?—Sorrow and disheartenment in every effort for existence; a log to hamper every step of your pathway to independence! Rise up, Mary," and he drew her on his heart; "come what may, my girl, these arms will shelter you still from the cold,

heartless world. I am richer now, Mary, and to-morrow you and that poor old woman shall leave this place; and once away, oh, then!——" He spoke the last words with a stern resolution.

"What, Miles?" and she clasped his clenched hand in her's, and gazed terrified in his flashing eyes.

"I'll return to my home abroad," he uttered, dropping them to conceal *their* speech, lest she should read aright.

CHAPTER VI.

"I'm sure," said Sylvia Formby, rocking herself backwards and forwards in her chair, about an hour after Minnie's return, "I don't know what *can* be done with this girl; she certainly is a dreadful cause of anxiety to all, and especially to poor me!" She was one of those who delighted in being miserable. One would really have imagined, from her manner and conversation about her, that Minnie was one of the very worst girls in existence—an unruly, impossible-to-govern creature. Aunt Sylvia was in her own room; and opposite to her, shaking her head in sorrowing sympathy, perched on the edge of a chair, sat Mrs. Gillett.

"Young ladies is a dreadful responsibility," ejaculated the latter guardedly, (it was safe speaking in general terms;) "all ar'n't as you was, Miss Sylvia!"

"I'm sure I don't know what *is* to be done with my niece," continued the other, unnoticing the compliment. "I feel some harm will happen to her, if she be not married out of the way. What with your master's obstinacy, and Miss Dorcas's dulness of comprehension, the girl will assuredly be lost unless I exert myself."

"In coorse, Miss," ventured the listener.

"She never will marry the squire; that she positively asserts, and her manner proves it. Then, Mr. Skaife—what is he? Only a poor curate, who has just bread enough for himself, and nothing to spare; and she don't like him. Now, Mr. Dalby has the whole patronage of the neighbourhood, except Mr. Burton's, and he's a very charming man: what more can she desire?"

"And he'll have Squire Burton's business again, Miss; that's for sartain, for they were seen walking together yesterday."

"I don't exactly know how he lost it," said Sylvia. "Do you?"

"All along *of* Miss Minnie," was the response. "Mr. Dalby, when the old squire died, Mr. Tremenhere, conducted the business for Mr. Burton; indeed he had known the facts long before, they say—that is, the servants say; howsomdever, since they both have been coming a-coortin' Miss, they haven't been such friends. But I'll tell you what I think, Miss Sylvia," here the sybil lowered her voice to a whisper—"and mind I'm seldom wrong, and I wouldn't say this to any one but yourself—I believe, if Miss isn't looked after, just for contrariness sake, if he stays hereabouts, she'll get a-coortin' with that young Mr. Tremenhere!"

"An illegitimate child!" shrieked the virtuous Sylvia, in horror.

"Yes, Miss Sylvia, with him; and, as you say, it's dreadful, for he hasn't a name in the world to call his own, except Miles, and what sort of a *cognation*, as master calls it, is that for her to marry? He hasn't

his father's nor his mother's; he's a outlaw, and any one that pleased might shoot him like a dog, I hear."

Sylvia had only heard a portion of this sentence, the prophecy about Miles and Minnie. She had extraordinary faith in the worldly perceptiveness of Mrs. Gillett. She anxiously inquired the foundation for the other's suspicion; but the good generalship of the matron forbade any undue confidence respecting her reasons, merely contenting herself with alarming her listener to the fullest extent of her powers, by persisting in her belief, as arising *principally*, she laid a stress on this word, thereby implying that she held back more cogent articles for her belief, from the fact of Miss Minnie's own statement, that she had been walking with this Miles Tremenhere, for to no one would this very politic woman confess, that she had recognised him herself at a glance. Mrs. Gillett was a very cautious person indeed, one of those whose opinions would never choke them from a too hasty formation of them, nor her words leave a bitterness in her mouth from an inconsiderate utterance of them. She was a perfect reflector, throwing her light upon others, and not suffering thereby herself. Minnie had a sorry day of it; first, Sylvia had lectured her, then Juvenal, and lastly, Dorcas commenced questioning, but this latter did it, as she ever acted with her beloved niece, in kindness. As for the others, they would fain have bent her to their separate wills; but Minnie had learned to judge for herself coolly and dispassionately, else where would she have been, occurring as it did, that all three had fixed upon a different object for her hus-

band? To Dorcas she was all affection, rendering full justice to that aunt's interest in her, and correct judgment; but it so happens that in affairs of the heart, our very dearest and best friends are too frequently incapable of judging what would be most conducive to our real happiness, though, in a mere worldly point of view, they may be right. A little counsel, a little guidance, and much sincere interest in our welfare, are the best methods after all; *certainly not* coercion, that makes us infallibly look with premature dislike on the one for whom we are persecuted.

"I do wonder, dear aunt," said Minnie to the one she loved so well, "why you are so anxious to make me marry, never having done so yourself—how is it?"

The truth never crossed Minnie's mind. Dorcas looked down, and a pale blush of something resembling shame crossed her cheek; then she looked up with candour and affection. "My dear child," she said, "Sylvia would not perhaps like my telling the exact truth, which is this, that in fact no one ever asked either of us!"

"Is it possible!" exclaimed her niece, amazed beyond measure. How could she, worried as she was by an excess of suitors, guess the extraordinary position of a woman who never had one? and aunt Dorcas had been assuredly pretty, and still was very comely. "My dear aunt," she cried again, after a silence of thought on both sides. "It must have been your own fault. Oh! pray, endeavour to induce Sylvia to seek a husband for herself, and leave me alone; or do make her busy herself for uncle, and then you and I shall be at peace. I

shouldn't like *you* to marry. I'm very selfish, dear aunt; but I should be so much afraid of losing your love," and she fondly kissed her cheek.

"I never shall now, dear Minnie; but when you marry, you will love another better than me— I shall only be your aunt, and so it should be."

"Do you know," answered her niece, fixing her sweet eyes upon her, "I often think I never shall marry; I have heard so much about it, that the subject has become quite distasteful to me."

"Oh! you will change your mind, Minnie, when the one you can, and *should* love, comes."

"What do you mean, aunt, by should love?"

"There are those in the world we ought to guard our affections against; their loss might bring misery."

"Whom are they? would—would, now, supposing an impossible case—would Mr. Tremenhere, if he loved me, be such a one?"

"Why do you think of him, child?" and her aunt looked scrutinizingly in her face.

"Oh, because," answered the blushing Minnie, "he is the first stranger I have met likely to enter into my ideas of such a case; all the constant visiters here have the consent of some one of my relatives,—the mere acquaintances I meet when we go any where, have nothing against them,—I daresay, if I liked one of them, every one of you would, though perhaps reluctantly, say 'yes;' but Mr. Tremenhere—he is different, poor fellow! How I pity him! I do indeed, aunt, and he is so agreeable."

The aunt, unworldly wise as she was, had fallen into a reverie; before she aroused herself to reply, the sound of carriage-wheels without drew her attention to the window. Minnie was the first there,—"Whom have we here? two ladies!" Her aunt was beside her.

"Why Minnie, these are your aunts, Lady Ripley and Dora!" exclaimed she.

"That Dora!" cried her niece, as a tall handsome girl stepped from the carriage; "how altered she is,—I wonder if she will know me?" and though something like a chill had fallen on her heart at sight of her cousin, she sprang across the room to meet her. It was not Dora's beauty which had pained Minnie—she did not know what jealousy was then, certainly, of mere personal charms—but it was the chilling influence of pride which spoke in every movement of her cousin; even in the act of stepping from her carriage, she looked like a priestess of that spirit, following in her footsteps. As she entered the hall, Minnie—simple and beautiful Minnie—stood half abashed before her. Dora's fine eyes were wandering over the group, as she coldly returned the embraces of her aunt Sylvia and Juvenal; at last they rested on Minnie, who had just appeared,—the cold smile warmed, and the cousins were in each other's arms.

"Dear Minnie!" said Dora, "I have longed so much to see you," and she embraced her tenderly.

"I was afraid you would have forgotten me," answered the delighted girl.

"Oh! I never forget those whom I have loved; I often have wished you with me in Italy;" and her fine face,

lit up with warmth and sincerity, became perfectly beautiful. The girls sat down side by side, and hand in hand, conversing, after Dora had duly embraced all. Lady Ripley was different to the other members of her family. She appeared more like a composition of all, with a cloak of pride over the whole, in which she completely wrapped herself up; only now and then, when the cloak opened, some of her realities slipped out. She had less of Dorcas than of either of the others,—silly as Juvenal, worldly like Sylvia, and a little bit of Dorcas's good-nature composed the whole. She had married, most unexpectedly, one far above herself in rank and station. Not having had time to familiarize herself with the position before entering upon it, she plunged in, and became for awhile overwhelmed. The country gentleman's daughter forgot the real dignity of the ladylike person, who may pass without comment any where in the rank of countess, so suddenly forced upon her; then, too, the Earl was one of the coldest, proudest men in the world, and lived long enough to engraft a sufficient quantity of the *vice* of pride (when attached to mere station) upon his only child's really noble nature, for a dozen scions of nobility. Lady Dora's keen perception, as she grew up, readily detected the real from the assumed; and having much loved, respected, and looked up to her father, his vice became a virtue in her eyes,—a natural one; whereas her mother's assumption of it, made her, without becoming undutiful, still look upon her as a merely bad copy; consequently, her aunts and uncle became sharers of her species of contempt. Indeed, she had carried

that impression away with her when she quitted them and England, three years before, for Italy; and the knowledge of the world acquired since then, had rather strengthened the feeling. Since that period she had lost her father, and this keenly-felt loss hardened the girl's softer emotions. She seemed incapable of any thing like warmth of affection; for, the first ebullition of joy over on seeing Minnie, whom she really liked better than any person almost in the world, she sat like a beautiful statue, just warmed enough to life to speak and listen;—the face had become colourless again, the smile cold and proud, and the haughty eyes and haughtier brow, seemed to glance or bend with equal indifference on all around her. She was perfect in her beauty as Minnie—one, was the damask rose for richness, the other, the chaste lily; for when Dora's colour rose, nothing could surpass that ripe sunset glow,—it was magnificent from its eastern brightness and depth; whereas Minnie's never became more than a beautiful blush, flitting and returning like a swallow over a wave. Dora's hair was the very darkest chestnut, yet this it was, a colour seldom seen, nothing resembling black nor brown, but the exact colour of the nut itself, rich and mellow. Her eyes—there was her charm of face, they were so dark and lustrous—*velvet eyes*, with the sun shining on them; extravagant, too, for they expended their glances right and left on all, not from a desire to slay her thousands, but, like the donation of the rich and proud to the beggar, she flung her gold away, not caring who might gather it up; it was flung from an

inexhaustible source of wealth—it was the natural love of expenditure, inherent in the generous mind giving of its profusion. No one had ever seen her move quickly, scarcely even as a child; when she rose from her seat, she seemed to rise by some quiet galvanism, majestically, gracefully, but without energy or effort; so it was with all; grace presided over all—cold natural grace. Where her mother used violent force to seem dignified, and often thus destroyed the lady, Dora without a thought, so to seem, was an empress in majesty. Minnie was slight and girlish, her cousin matured in form, though not too much so for her height and bearing, with a waist the hand might almost have circled; one curl on either side of her oval face fell quite to that slender waist in unrestrained perfection, heavy and glossy, veiling, but not concealing the beautiful, but strongly marked eyebrow.

The cousins escaped as soon as possible to Minnie's room; there is a natural restraint ever felt by the least checked before their elders—girls have a language apart of their own. Alas! for the wintry day, when the falling snow of worldly care chills the ideality of thought, and brings to the lip only the sterner realities of life. The two sat and talked of old days, even to them. Dora spoke of Italy, of her father's death soon after she and Minnie parted, and the proud eyes forgot their pride when nature bade them weep—how Minnie loved her then! there was so much softness in *her* nature. She folded her gentle arms round Dora, and soothed her so lovingly, that the eyes looked up upon her in gratitude and affec-

tion. Then, to divert her attention, Minnie told her all her troubles—squire, parson, and lawyer; but she did not breathe the name of Miles Tremenhere. He had so completely won upon her sympathy, that she dreaded to hear Dora speak of him, either in contempt, or else mere worldly policy; so they sat and talked, until Lady Ripley summoned her daughter, by the voice of a French maid, "to dress for dinner."

"I am sure," whispered Aunt Sylvia to Mrs. Gillett on the stairs, when she was retiring to bed that night, "I and Lady Ripley shall not agree long, if she prolongs her stay; for 'tis quite absurd, Gillett, the idea of her dressing in such a style for our quiet dinner, only ourselves, and her annoyance because my niece, Lady Dora, refused to do the same! It is putting notions of dress into Miss Minnie's head, which will make her look down on every one here. I shall tell her so to-morrow; I always like to give my candid opinion, though she mightn't like it!"

"So I would, Miss," answered her agreeing listener. "For no one can be a better judge of every thing than yourself; for I'm sure, as I say to every body, 'just look at our Miss Sylvia, why, she's like a busy bee! she's a pattern—that she is!'"

Mrs. Gillett walked down the corridor, and, coming from her daughter's room, she met Lady Ripley.

"Ah, Gillett!" said that lady, patronisingly; "I'm glad to see you looking so well."

Gillett curtsied to the ground. "I'm sure, my lady," she replied, "it's only the reflections of your

ladyship's presence which make me look so; for, as I've just been saying below, it *is* a pleasure to see a lady look as you do, younger by years than you were, years ago, and know too, what's due to herself, and dress every day as if she was going to court! Ah! it's a pity the dear ladies, Miss Sylvia and Miss Dorcas, is so plain in their ways; it's quite spoiling sweet Miss Minnie, who cares no more for dress or state than if she had been born, if I may be so bold as to say it of your ladyship's niece, in a poor cottage of a mother always knitting woolly stockings!"

"I must see what's to be done, Gillett," answered her ladyship in a queenly tone; "I will have some serious conversation with my brother about her to-morrow."

"If your ladyship will please not to say *I* said any thing," whispered the politic housekeeper.

"I never quote other's opinions, my good woman," was the haughty reply, as she sailed into her room, with a majestic "Good-night to you."

"To think," soliloquized Gillett, as she toiled up a second flight of stairs, "she should be so amazing proud now, when I remember her setting herself off to the best advantage to attract the notice of our passan then, the late *re*cumbent!" There in an hour in every one's life, when he or she is candid and natural; generally it falls between locking the bedroom door at night, and snuffing out the candle—'tis an hour of thoughtful soliloquy!

CHAPTER VII.

PEOPLE are early in the country—"early to bed, early to rise." It was just ten by Minnie's hall clock as Mrs. Gillett became confidential to herself, and at that hour another person, some distance from Gatestone, was struggling with the voices of nature and truth united, which rung the word "shame" in his ears—this was the squire. He sat alone. All the servants had retired; his own man even dismissed. He sat in a small study adjoining his bedroom—not that he studied much, but the room had so been planned and arranged, and so he left it. A few additions of his own had been made, such as a brace of favourite pistols, a gun or two, spurs, whips, fishing-rods, and their accompaniments; the books on their neglected shelves were as silent memory. They spoke to no one; no one sought or conversed with them; their thoughts were sealed within their own breasts—like glowing eyes gazing on the sightless, no looks lit up to meet their glances. Beautiful, cheering things, among which we might live alone for ever, nor feel our loneliness. *Man* would perhaps sink off into drowsy rest; but the *soul* creeping forth, cheered by the stillness, could seek its companions in those leaves cling-

ing together with the damp of years, and live with them in long ages gone by, when they were permitted to speak above the mere practical spirits of the present day. Poetry was there in sorrowing maidenhood, as she glanced upwards at an old mandolin with chords, suspended against the wall, the loving once, now dumb suitor, who has sung her praises, and wooed her to smile! It was strange that old mandolin should be still there: it was the one on which Miles's mother had often played and sung to him in infancy and boyhood! It was strange, then, that Marmaduke Burton should sit, as he sat on that evening, facing it. While he turned over piles of gloomy-looking papers and parchments, his brow was scowling, more so than usual; his face, that cold, livid colour, which the warm heart never avows as its index. At his feet lay an uncouth-looking bulldog; he seldom was seen without this companion. Somehow, if the dog were absent, Marmaduke became uneasy; cowards seldom rely upon themselves alone. Every paper, as it passed through his hands, was carefully examined, and then as carefully folded up and placed within a large drawer by his side, evidently one of some old cabinet. "Nothing," he whispered to himself. "Dalby said there was nothing—no proof; for, after all, I would not have it on my conscience to say, I *knew* there was proof, and withheld it. 'Tis not for me to *search* for writings or witnesses *against* myself," this was added after a thoughtful pause. After awhile he continued, "Besides, it is scarcely probable that old Tremenhere ever married that poor Spanish girl; those girls at Gib-

raltar are not of very noted virtue. I should have been a fool indeed, to sit down quietly and allow another to enjoy mine by right, from a mere idea of honour. Had he succeeded, he would not have shared with me. I *did* offer him a competency," all this time he had been assorting the papers. "Nothing here," he continued. "What's this? oh! a letter from old Tremenhere, written after his mar—after his connection" (he corrected himself) "with that woman Helene Nunoz, he, evidently being here, and she still abroad, in Paris—eh? not Gibraltar. What says he?" For some moments he attentively read. "I have seen two or three of his letters," he said thoughtfully, "among old papers, and in all he speaks of one 'Estree.' Who can he be? here it is again." He read aloud a passage, accentuating every word, and dwelling on his own final comment thoughtfully for some moments. "'Do you see D'Estree often? Is he kind as ever to my Helena? his child, as he calls her. I should much like *ours* to be christened by him; might he not be indueed to return with us?' This must have been some clergyman or priest," was the thoughtful comment. At that moment his dog arose uneasily from the carpet at his feet, and walked towards the door. "What's the matter, Viper?" asked his master, starting timidly. "Look to it, dog—good dog;" but the dog returned quietly to its former place, and Marmaduke concluded the letter, which only spoke of love, and regret at absence. In the concluding lines again Viper moved to the door, and snuffed the air beneath the crevice. His master grew uneasy; he watched

the dog, and, while doing so, tore up the letter he held, and flung it into a basket beneath the table. Viper moved about whining, not in anger, but more in satisfaction and impatience of restraint. The squire arose, and somewhat nervously approached the door. These letters had unnerved him; his hand was on the lock, the dog sprung up with pleasure; another hand turned the handle from the outside, it opened, and Mary Burns entered. As she did so, the dog fawned upon her.

"I might have guessed it!" ejaculated Marmaduke, falling back and scowling upon her. "Only you would Viper meet in such a manner; the dog's faithful to old acquaintance, I see." She stood quite still, silent, and very pale. "Down, poor animal, down!" she whispered at last to the dog, which was jumping up to caress her hand.

"I have yet to learn why you are here?" asked Marmaduke, sullenly, "and how?"

"I came to restore you this," she uttered, holding up a key in her hand; "this will explain how I am here."

"Oh, true! I had forgotten you came through the quiet gate leading by the shrubbery; I trust the reminiscence of the past, which such a walk must inevitably have awakened, procured you pleasure?"

"Sneer on, Marmaduke Burton! I came prepared to suffer all to-night. I came to restore you this, and also to implore a favour at your hands?"

"At mine! what can I do for you? I thought the hour of solicitation had passed between us—will you not be seated?" He offered her a chair; she appeared

choking with emotion; and yet, though almost powerless to stand, waved her hand in token of dissent, as he pushed a seat towards her, and merely laid one hand upon the back of it for support.

"As you will," he said coldly, noticing the action; "and perhaps you will pardon my asking you as much as possible to abridge this visit; you see I am engaged." He pointed to the table of papers.

"I come," she said at last with great effort, "to implore one favour at your hands, as some mitigation of the deep remorse I feel. Miles Tremenhere is here—I do beseech you," here she clasped her hands, "not to make my burthen heavier to bear, by seeking to injure him farther."

"Woman!" he cried, standing erect before her, "do you remember to whom you are speaking? How have I injured him? Am I not heir—lawful heir—here? I wish to hear no more; go, you have chosen to place a barrier yourself between us—henceforth, 'tis as you have willed it. I offered you independence and oblivion of all, away from this, and you have refused, so you must take the consequences."

"I beseech you!" she exclaimed again, not heeding his words, "to have pity on that man, for the sake of his mother, who was one to me."

"That is perceptible," he said scornfully, "in the good fruit of her cultivation—vice seldom produces——"

"Hold!" she cried, springing towards him, and grasping his arm; "revile me as you will, but not her—she was pure as an angel, and you know it! And I adjure

you by the wrong you have done her son—to spare him now; let him go in peace."

"Woman, I bid you go," he cried, shaking her touch from him, "before my patience becomes exhausted; what am I doing, or going to do to that man? Let him go as he will, I shall not molest him unless he cross my path; then woe betide him, whatever may be done, I'll do, nor ask whether he be relative or stranger."

"I only pray you," she continued, "should he seek you, as I fear he may, to be temperate, remembering what you were to each other, what you are in blood." She tried to soothe; had that not been the case, she would have fearlessly spoken all her thought of his treachery.

"Why do you think he will seek me?" he asked, and the eye, ever uncertain in its glance, shrunk from her's. He began to dread a possible meeting.

"Because, because!" she hesitated a moment; then, by an effort over her emotion, added more resolutely, "because he knows *all*, and Miles is not one silently to pass over wrong to one he once loved and respected."

"Oh, that's it—is it?" Rising, he advanced a step towards the trembling woman; but suddenly paused, and hastily turned round. "What was that?" he exclaimed, looking fixedly at a door behind him, at which Viper had sprung growling.

The study had two doors in it, one leading through the corridor—the one by which Mary had entered; the other leading to a dressing-room, adjoining Marmaduke's bedroom—it was at this one the dog lay growling.

"Curse that dog!" he cried angrily, "he makes one fanciful and nervous. Did you hear any thing?"

"Nothing," she rejoined, trembling with a strange tremor.

Marmaduke turned paler too than even he generally was—it was a coward pallor. Reaching a book from the table, he flung it at Viper, who startled, but not cowed, sprung under the table, upsetting the basket as he did so, which contained the torn papers; and then, as his master turned away, he returned again to his post at the door, and commenced scratching and growling at it. Marmaduke uttered a deep oath, and, seizing the animal by the throat, hastily opened the door leading towards the corridor, and flung him out. As he turned his back, a sudden, uncontrollable impulse seized Mary to stoop, and, unseen by him, grasp and conceal a paper which had fallen from the basket as Viper upset it. She felt that any thing written by that man might be of value to Miles; moreover, she saw how he (Marmaduke) had been employed with old papers and parchments, which made the one she held possibly more valuable.

"Now," he said, closing the door, "let us have a few final words, and then leave me; and if we meet again at your seeking, it will be a day of sorrow to you. I wish to do you no injury, for I liked you once—do not mistake," he hastily added, seeing she was about to speak; "I never *loved* you—no, that was man's right of speech when I said so; we are bound to employ the same weapons others use against ourselves."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean lying and deceit. You never loved *me*—*I* never had that feeling for you; you have this evening shown me why you became mine. He had loved you, and then forsook—revenge dictated the act which made you give me a claim to call you mine; dislike to every thing fostering affection for that impostor and base-born hound, made me resolve to win you, and well have I succeeded! False to his affection for you, which you have confessed, and thereby made me doubly glad in having ruined you! false to me, if he so please it, I doubt not. Take back that garden key, woman, how do you know but that this impostor may some day be master here, and you require it for your secret visits to the manor-house? Verily, you love the place! feline in your affections, 'tis the place, not person, you care for!" As he concluded, he drew the deep-drawn breath of a man suffocating with overwhelming thoughts, bursting like deadly missiles from a shell, scattering death around; for, as he discharged them forth, the woman, stricken with shame and sorrow, cowered down, and buried her face in her hands. Marmaduke's deep sigh, as he concluded, was echoed by one still deeper—it was a groan, and came from the doorway leading into the dressing-room; he had but time to turn half round, when a heavy hand was on his arm.

"Unsay those words, 'impostor' and 'base-born hound,'" said Miles Tremenhere ('twas he) beneath his breath; "or the world shall add the other to them, and a *true* one, 'avenger;'—as I am a living man this night, unless you do, or you, or I shall not quit this room alive!"

The presence even of that trembling woman imparted a feeling of protection to Marmaduke's coward heart. By a sudden jerk he disengaged his arm, and with one stride reached the opposite door. To think and do had been the work of an instant, the coward's self-shield through another. With a trembling hand he opened the door, and called "Viper," and the dog sprang in. No word was needed; the brave brute knew all enemies to his master, and a second spring would have brought him to Miles's throat, had that man not, foreseeing treachery, been on his guard. With one blow of his small, but muscular fist, he felled the animal, and, before it could recover itself, his hand grasped its throat; the woman shrieked—a true woman's heart is tender to every living thing. "Spare it, Miles!" she cried. "Poor, faithful brute!"

But Miles had no thought otherwise; while Marmaduke stood in a species of panic, which rendered further effort for an instant vain, the other strode to the door near which he stood, and, flinging the dog forth, calmly turned the key, and placed it in his pocket. This act alarmed Marmaduke; there is something to the cowardly man fearful in the calm of a resolute one. He turned hastily to fly, his hand was on the lock of the door leading to the corridor, but another's reached his before he turned it, and, without one uttered word, he felt his nerveless grasp withdrawn. The key grated in the lock beneath Miles's fingers; he saw him, too, with perfect composure, look around, and then, a feat of child's play to him, tear down the bell-rope, to prevent the possibility of Marmaduke's summoning asistance; this done, Miles

turned calmly round to where his cousin stood. Mary had dropped, powerless to stand, in a chair, and, with eyes distended by terror, watched every movement of the quiet desperation Miles portrayed.

"Now," he said, in untrembling resolution, as he fixed his eyes on his cousin, the stern brow knit over their intense gaze, "retraction full, and immediate!"

"Of what?" asked the other, endeavouring to seem calm and unconscious.

"Of 'impostor,' and 'base-born hound!'"

"Do you call it a noble act, to enter, as you have done this evening here, with the connivance of that traitress, and play cavesdropper?" cried Marmaduke, endeavouring to evade the demand of *retraction* of his tongue's hasty aspersion.

"'Tis false, that too!" answered Miles. "I followed this girl, 'tis true; I feared she might be again led to attempt suicide,—I saw her enter by the shrubbery gate,—strangely enough, I, too, had purposed visiting you this night by that entrance, to which I also have a key," (he held one up as he spoke,) "mine, since when we often entered thereby together, cousin Marmaduke. But I had intended my visit to have been made some hours later, deeming that possibly the hospitable lord of the manor-house might keep open house for his numerous friends, whose pleasures I would not have interrupted for worlds. My business is of a private nature; but, as she entered, I followed, and, knowing all the intricacies of the old place, why, I came by the private stair to the adjoining rooms; these rooms were mine!"

The man's voice slightly trembled as he uttered these words; for, in looking round, his eye rested on the old mandolin; it awakened a chord in his heart, not like its own —broken. Marmaduke perceived this emotion, and deemed it an advantage gained, not having seen whence arose that softened tone; but Mary had seen, and her eye following his, the tears gathered in a heavy cloud over her vision, as she looked up to the thing to which she had often danced, a light-hearted child; for her heart was now as powerless of joy as the mandolin of tone; error and death had worked their will in stilling both.

"I should like much to know why you are here? why you purposed coming?" inquired Marmaduke, gaining courage.

"Before I reply to that," answered Miles, himself once more, "I must have retraction. I tell you so; so let it be quickly done, for she heard it,—to her you shall unsay it, and then our interview must be alone."

"I will not leave you, Miles," uttered the girl, clasping his hand, which hung down, as she crept beside him; but he neither heard nor saw her.

"When I came to this neighbourhood again," said Miles, "it was not to seek you; it was for one reason only—to visit in peace some old haunts, old friends. I yet have a few left—on all, I found *your* hand. He who knew me from childhood, my father's respected tenant, you have striven to drive forth—and, look there," he pointed to Mary; "this is your work too, cowardly villain, to war with a woman, and urge her to destruction

by goading her to madness with falsehood and calumny; but this must pass awhile. First you shall clear from your lip by retraction the words you have said of my sainted mother; your act has, *for awhile*—mind I say only *for awhile*—cast a slur upon her fame; but the lion only slumbers, cousin Marmaduke—he will awake soon. But this night was the first time you ever, in my hearing, uttered the words to blast her; indeed, until to-night you have kept hidden from my vengeance. When you commenced your worthy suit against me, after the first day you left others to complete it, and fled, hidden like a reptile in sunlight,—you came forth at night to spread your venom around; but for all that, a day of retribution will come, only for to-night, I demand retraction."

Marmaduke felt chilled: there was something fearful in Miles's resolute calmness.

"If," he said, yet not daring to look up, "you will go and take that woman in peace (for I would not have it known, for many reasons, that *she* had been here,) I will say this, that I ought perhaps not to have spoken before her of family affairs."

"Man!" cried Miles, in a voice of thunder, "say all was a lie, an invention; it will not take your devil-bought position here from you, but retract every word *you shall!*"

"Hush!" whispered Marmaduke, as the other strode towards him, putting up his hands to ward off his coming; "hush! some one may hear us, and report this visit."

"Whom does he fear?" asked Miles, turning to Mary.

"He fears lest Miss Dalzell should be informed, probably," uttered the shrinking woman.

"Miss Dalzell!" cried Miles, awakening as from a dream; "she will *never* become the wife of this man; it would be profaning a creature stainless as the created day, before man made it blush for his sin; or looks and words only rank as liars."

Marmaduke glared on him, but durst not speak; he was awed by his cousin's sternness.

"Speak!" commanded Miles again impatiently; "I have yet a task to perform before we part, so hasten this; she must not see the rest. Come, man!" he uttered contemptuously, as the other visibly trembled, "speak the words: I promise you, reckless as *I* am of life, I have no purpose of taking yours, *if you speak.*" There was that about him which terrified the other; it was the first time they had met out of court since the suit.

"I spoke hastily, angrily," stammered Marmaduke at last, his eyes bent on the ground, one of his hands nervously turning a letter on the table, the other in his bosom; "but this woman goaded me to it."

"'Tis well," uttered Miles scornfully, "well done, to accuse another to shield our own fault. You know my mother to have been pure as ever woman was, only the *law* wanted proof."

"I believe she was a good woman," ejaculated the other, fearing some snare before witnesses.

"Fellow," cried Miles, seeing his hesitation, "I am not here to catch you in your words: you have calum-

niated, you shall restore; you have lied, you shall unlie. Do you not know in your heart that, though proof be wanting, my mother was a wife?" He made a movement towards where his cousin stood.

"I believe it," fell from the lips of the awed coward; "but you know the law will have——"

"Enough!" exclaimed Miles, waving his hand contemptuously. "I have devoted my life, with all its energies, to prove her to have been such, not for the sake of the land and tenements around us, but to rebuild in splendour an angel's darkened fame. Now, Mary, you have heard his retraction, leave us awhile, I will rejoin you before you have quitted the grounds."

"Let me stay, I beseech you, Miles," she whispered, her frame trembling with fear as he approached to put her forth.

"There can be no secrets she may not hear," hazarded Marmaduke, in terror himself at the idea of being alone with Miles. All the fear he had experienced as a boy of the other, when as children they quarrelled, stood before him, for Miles was of strong build, and great stature; he seemed to tower above his cousin, though actually less in height. A strange expression passed over Miles's face, as he looked from the one to the other.

"Well," he said, and a grim smile stole across his lip, and then disappeared—a mere phantom—"perhaps it is just it should be so. The man who honourably offends us, we meet in honourable fight; the cur which, coward like, yelps at and tears our heels,

what does it deserve? A cur's chastisement," he added, not waiting for a reply. Before Marmaduke had time to think, or the woman had time to rush between them, Miles seized him by the collar, and at the same moment, drawing a thickly knotted whip from his pocket, with all the force of his vigorous arm, he applied the lash over the other's shoulders. Mary shrieked in terror, and sunk fainting on her chair.

"Howl like a hound in your craven fear!" shouted Miles, as his cousin groaned and writhed beneath the lash, helpless in that strong hand. "Come Mary, girl, look up; this is for your wrong, a coward's act—a cur's punishment. There," he continued, flinging him almost lifeless from him at last, and panting himself with the effort. "You'll remember the first meeting with Miles Tremenhere;—one thing more," he took down his mother's mandolin from its place. "Poor, senseless thing," he said, "yet speaking words of love to me, you have been made to look on desecrating words, deeds, and thoughts, in this man's presence. You have lost your purity, like all of us, since *she* left you!" In his bitterness he forgot the suffering woman, who was weeping bitterly beside him. "Desecrated no more, speechless henceforth, and mute to all of the ruin around you!" he put the thing, which seemed as a breathing creature to him, beneath his foot, and with one stamp of his heel it flew into pieces. Crash after crash succeeded, until only a mass lay without shape on the floor. Marmaduke was speechless with terror and pain.

"Come Mary, my girl, look up now!" said Miles,

kindly taking her hand. "I have avenged you as well as I can; he will not forget us—come!"

And, almost carrying the terror-stricken girl, he passed out by the corridor, carefully locking the door on the other side, to avoid interruption, and so he quitted his own halls.

CHAPTER VIII.

Minnie had been so severely lectured by all, about her too frequent visits to the cottage of Mary Burns, and other rambles in thoughtful loneliness, that she felt embarrassed how to act. We have seen Dora was not yet wholly in her confidence; there was as yet a barrier of three years' width between them, which she hesitated at overleaping at once—it was one separating girlhood from womanhood. She had no one to consult but herself, and in her great anxiety to know what had been decided upon for this poor girl, in whom she felt so much interest, as Mr. Skaife had informed her, that assuredly Tremenhere would decide immediately something about her, she resolved to rise with the early bird of morn, which rose to song and heaven beneath her windows, and seek Mary's cottage. Only the gardener was at work, as she brushed the dew off the smoothly turfed lawn, at six the morning, after Tremenhere's meeting with his cousin, and bidding the man a kind good-morning, she hastened through the shrubbery, then light as a fawn skimmed over the path-fields, and reached Mary's cottage. The shutters were closed, and all in stillness; but the hour was so early, that she hesitated about awakening the inmates.

For some moments she stood irresolute, and walked round the spot. There is something in internal desolation, which always leaves an outward trace on the features, as on an abode. Something of this she felt; and at last gently rapped at the door—all was silent; then she repeated it—and each time with the like result. There was a latch, so she raised it, looked in, and then the cold truth became apparent; the place was tenantless!—all gone, and not a vestige left. Minnie stood in mute astonishment. How should she be enabled to discover the girl's fate?—from Mr. Skaife, perhaps; and then a chill came over her warm heart. Had this girl, whom she had so befriended, quitted without one word to express gratitude, or resolution of well-doing? and then, a something crossed her mind of regret. She should have liked to see Miles Tremenhere once more; he was so manly under his persecution by Marmaduke Burton. It is painful in our path through life to have that path crossed by a vision which flits away, only leaving a trace, and never again seen—such things often leave a memory for years. Minnie walked sadly home. It is something very undeceiving to the young heart—it's first lesson in worldly selfishness and ingratitude. She felt Mary must be an ungrateful girl so to depart; and, thinking all this, she walked up to her own room. No one had discovered her departure; and an hour afterwards she descended to the breakfast parlour, which looked over the beautiful lawn and flower-garden, and there she found all the family waiting, except Lady Ripley, who always breakfasted in her own room. The day passed in busy

occupations to all, yet amidst all she felt a chill at heart —the chill of disappointed confidence. Many neighbouring families called to pay homage to Lady Ripley; and the report was brought by more than one, that Mr. Burton was seriously indisposed, and hints were thrown out of a hostile meeting having taken place between the cousins, as it was known that desperate character, (alas! for those no longer Fortune's favourites,) Miles Tremenhere, had been seen in the neighbourhood.

"It must have been late yesterday, then, if they met," said Juvenal, "for Burton was here in the afternoon."

"It is not known when it took place, but he has been confined to his bed all day, and his lawyer, Dalby, sent for. Though Mr. Burton denies it himself, there is every reason to suppose 'tis true," rejoined the visiter.

"Some means of ascertaining the fact should be resorted to, and such a character banished the neighbourhood," said Sylvia, acrimoniously; "it is a natural consequence of an ill-conducted mother, that the child should be infamous."

"Oh, aunt!" cried Minnie, "don't say such a wicked thing; for all say Mrs. Tremenhere was good, and mild!"

"Besides," said the peacemaker, Dorcas, "you should give her the benefit of the doubt; many believe her to have been married, though proof was wanting."

"Always my good, charitable aunt," whispered Minnie, taking her hand affectionately.

"Ah! Lady Dora," exclaimed the visiter, rising as the other entered, "I am charmed to see you here once more, and looking so lovely; and her ladyship, too,"

continued the old dame, as Lady Ripley sailed into the room after her daughter, "you are really as a sister, in appearance, to your beautiful child!"

This is one of the most pleasing compliments in the world to a mamma with a grown-up daughter,—it deadens the sound of Time's wheels, as he hurries his chariot onwards,—it is like laying down tan over that rugged road of matronism, which has an ugly stage beyond, beginning with "grand,"—Lady Ripley graciously received the compliment, and, smiling blandly, slid into a corner of the sofa whereon the visiter sat. "There always has been considered a great likeness existing between us," said the Countess; "we were painted in full length in one picture at Florence, and the likeness has been considered remarkable, by all visiting Loughton Castle, whither I sent it. By the way, Dora, what was the name of the artist, a very promising young man, whom I patronised at the request of Lord Randolph Gray, who had taken him by the hand? I always forget names."

"Mamma, you should remember that," answered Lady Dora, and a slight colour passed over her cheek; yet soon fled abashed before the stern, proud eye, it was only momentary; "for we had a neighbour here, near my aunt's, of the same name—Tremenhere."

"Tremenhere!" cried several simultaneously; but Minnie's struck most forcibly on Lady Dora's ear; she turned towards her, and, looking fixedly upon her, said, "Do *you* know Mr. Tremenhere, Minnie?"

"Only since yesterday," answered she; "but before

then I had learned to pity him, but we cannot mean the same person: I do not think Mr. Tremenhere is an artist."

"How can you tell what he may, or may not be?" said Juvenal, crossly; "I'm sure, after his unnatural conduct towards his cousin, you should wonder at nothing."

"Of course," said Lady Dora, quite composedly, "they cannot be the same person; but I assure you, the Mr. Tremenhere we knew, was a distinguished young artist, much sought after, though only an artist. Of his family, we never inquired."

"This is, in my opinion," said Lady Ripley, "the great error of society abroad; and I fear it is creeping into English habits—the mixed nature of society. This Mr. Tremenhere was received unquestioned, nay, sought after every where, for his talents.

"It is only the good old English families which know how to keep up proper distinctions," chimed in Sylvia, to the accompaniment of an approving "Assuredly," from the visiter.

"I think *real* talent should always be upheld—'tis a noble gift, to which we owe homage," said the gentle Dorcas.

Minnie smiled "yes," but did not like to utter her opinion too decidedly before a stranger; besides, she was thinking.

"What are you thinking of, Minnie?" whispered her cousin.

"Of the narrow-mindedness of the world," she an-

swered boldly. "I'd rather see a man ennoble his name by good deeds or talents, than bear a merely empty title—would you not, Dora?"

"I think position should be upheld and respected," rejoined the other, "or else we should become republican at once. I respect, revere genius; but even that has, in my opinion, no right to overstep certain barriers." Lady Dora Vaughan had been nurtured on family pride, which digests badly, and chokes up many good things with its prejudice.

Here the conversation took a different turn. Other persons called, and the Tremenheres—one, or different individuals—were no more alluded to. Even her cousin's presence, failed entirely to remove the weight from Minnie's heart, she was so saddened by disappointment, and none came to cheer or possibly explain—for Mr. Skaife even had not appeared. The shades of evening set in, and she and her cousin were strolling together in the various alleys and walks of the beautiful gardens round Gatestone, and in that same half hour Mrs. Gillett sat in her housekeeper's room, inhaling the odour of the garden into which it looked. She had been trimming a cap—something had come over her mind—a question of whether she should put a bow on the said cap, as Mademoiselle Julie, the countess's French maid, had suggested, or leave it alone. The war within herself, between the accustomed snowy lace and a pink ribbon, had ended in a prostration of the nervous system, and consequent sleep ensued. She was sitting opposite the window with

the cap in one hand, the ribbon in the other, when Morpheus seized upon her, and she slept, and dreamed that she was a Maypole bedizened with many-coloured ribbons, and the village girls dancing round her. "What curious things one dreams!" to be sure, she exclaimed waking up at last; and putting both articles on the table beside her, and she rubbed her eyes, not yet half cleared from sleep. "How them peas do grow!" she continued, gazing dizzily out of the window in the evening duskiness and her own dreamy state. "Why, it seems only yesterday I was saying to John Gardener that they never would pod; and now they darkens up this window, there's no seeing out! Lauks-a-marcy!" she exclaimed, shrinking back in her chair in terror, as a cluster of them, sticks and all, appeared to her half-awakened sight to advance nearer, taking a human form as they did so. "Lauks-a-marcy! what's a going to happen to us?" Her fears were certainly not groundless, for the humanized peas drew close to the window, stooped, and stepped in. The window of this room was on a level with the walk outside; and through this, Minnie as a child, and even Dora, had been in the habit of entering as by a door, for a chair generally stood at it, which answered the purpose of a mere step to enter by.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Gillett," said Miles Tremenhere, as he did so with perfect composure. "You would not speak to me last time we met; so I have come to my old haunt, and as I was used to do when a boy, to have some conversation with you." By an involuntary movement, without uttering a word, she staggered to

her feet, grasped her cap and ribbons in her hand, and was making towards the door, but Tremenhere intercepted her quietly before she was half-way there. "Stop," he said gently, smiling as he spoke, "I don't mean to harm, or alarm you; listen quietly to me, good Mrs. Gillett. Come, you cannot have quite forgotten the sweet youth who has so often sat in this room with you; and i'faith, too, I remember those hospitable cupboards" (and he glanced around) "wherein I discovered many a treasure hidden for 'good Madame Tremenhere's son,' as you were used to call me." A sigh half choked the lighter tone as he spoke. Gillett stood still, and looked at him. She was not a bad woman—far from it; but only a very politic one. She would gladly have pleased all parties; but the peculiarity of the case sometimes, as in Minnie's for instance—forbad it.

"Lock the door," she whispered, pointing behind him; "then speak low, and tell me what you want." Her commands were soon obeyed; and, like two conspirators, they sat down in a corner and began talking.

"You see, Master Miles," she whispered, "times is sadly changed, and I am obliged to be friends with my betters; and, then you know that I don't want to hurt your feelin's—but there have been queer tales about your——"

"Hush!" he said emphatically, grasping her hands, "not a word against *her*. Mrs. Gillett, you know what she was to all—you know that the day she died, this village had but one voice to bewail her—but one sentence to mourn her with. 'Heaven gave her for awhile

to shew what angels may walk the earth'—this you know, Mrs. Gillett; and you *know*, too, that she has been cruelly maligned. No," he cried, rising energetically, forgetful of all necessity for secrecy, "as Heaven hears me, I do not care for the loss of all, save that, in losing that, a mother's sacred fame has been trampled upon."

"There," cried Mrs. Gillett, following and taking his hand, not without emotion; "sit down, I know it has been a sad cut-up for you; but times will change, maybe, and you be better off, and all forgot."

"Never!" he emphatically exclaimed. "A mother's wrongs should never be forgotten by a son until washed away."

"Talking of washing away," said his attentive listener; "there be a rumour to-day, that summut happened up at the house last night; you haven't done nothing of that sort to the squire, have you, Master Miles?"

"No," he replied, thoughtfully; "my great debt remains yet unpaid."

"Well, I'm sure it's a pity," she added, "that all parties can't agree; there be plenty for both on 'e up at the manor-house; and such friends as you were as boys!"

"Why didn't you speak to me yesterday, Mrs. Gillett?" he asked. "Were you afraid of Miss Dalzell, or Mr. Skaife? Both seem to my judgment good, excellent creatures, apart from the generality of the world, for they did not fear the contact with a fallen man; but I suppose I must not ask you——" He appeared to

be seeking time or courage to speak his more earnest motive in seeking her.

"Well," said she at last, hesitatingly, "I must speak it out, though you bid me not; so don't go to be offended, for I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world; but them as does wrong, brings much on their children. You have been cruelly treated by your parents, to be left so long in——"

"Mrs. Gillett!" he cried, rising in agitation, "even from you, my old friend, I cannot hear this. Do not let others lead your kind heart to do wrong, even in thought; some day *all* shall know my mother as I do, or I will die in the struggle with her enemies."

"Oh! don't do nothing of that sort," cried she, mistaking his meaning; "getting killed a'n't the way to right her; and this I will say, that a better lady never lived—and in the hearts of the poor; the best home to have, after all. But it a'n't a thing I'm component to judge, Master Miles; for foreigners, they say, don't see them things as we do."

"Well," he replied, reseating himself, and passing his hand over his brow; "let's change the subject, it always pains me; but *her* day of retribution will come—my sainted mother!" and involuntarily he raised his hat, in reverential awe, as if an angel were looking down upon him.

"Don't be cast down, Master Miles," said the woman, "and don't talk on them miserable subjects, all in the dark here, as one may say; it makes one oncomfortable and queer. Now, tell me, what do you want with me?"

"I want to see Miss Dalzell. Can you manage that for me?"

"Mussiful powers! no," she exclaimed, in surprise and horror.

"It must be accomplished somehow, Mrs. Gillett; see her I *must*."

"Well, if I didn't think so!" she said, thinking aloud of what she had previously hinted to Sylvia.

"Think what—what do you mean?"

"Oh nothink, nothink—there, *do* go; pray, do'e go!" she energetically cried, alarmed at the phantom her imagination had conjured up. "It won't do, depend upon it; *they* would stir up the whole earth to find and punish you, if you did it; for she's the darling of all, and they'd all *ignite* against you—lawyer, parson, squire, master, mississes, and all!"

"In the name of patience, my good Mrs. Gillett, what *do* you mean?" he asked laughing.

"Why, I saw it—I said it—I knew it—though I ain't a Dippibus, as master calls fortune-tellers; but don't go any farther—leave off where you are!" and she crunched up her cap in her energy.

"Are you mad?" he exclaimed, securing her reckless hands. "I tell you I *must* see Miss Dalzell, if only for a moment. I have a message for her."

Mrs. Gillett was rocking in her chair in agony; her position exceeded any thing embarrassing she had ever conceived. What could she do? Here she was locked in with a desperate man, who only said "must." How could she ever reconcile this difficulty to practicable

action? how bind this wild horse to her daily car of every body's necessities? their calls upon her to bear their burthens—her carrier's cart of packages—she was in fearful perplexity.

"Is there any thing so dreadful in my demand?" he asked. "Let it be here, for five minutes. We met yesterday—you know we did, though you would not recognise me. She will not refuse, I know."

"Can't you say what you have to say through the passan, Master Miles," she uttered at last, struggling for a straw.

"No; I must see herself. Why do you fear me so much? Do you suppose I would insult, or injure one, whom report says so good and kind—a woman, too? Fie Mrs. Gillett—fie! to wrong me so much, the man you've known from boyhood."

"Oh! Master Miles, it ain't that—it ain't, indeed; but we oftentimes harms without meaning it," and she looked meaningly at him. He seemed to awaken as from a dream.

"You cannot suppose," he cried, "that I, a poor outcast now, come here to woo any woman; still less Miss Dalzell, whose whole family are my bitterest enemies. I tell you no, Mrs. Gillett; I have no such thought. From all I have heard—the little I saw of her yesterday, for the first time—I respect, admire, and reverence Miss Dalzell, but more I never shall now—I have another at heart." He alluded to his self-imposed task of duty and love, to re-establish his mother's fame.

"You a'n't deceiving me, Master Miles," she said looking up, mistaking his meaning.

"I solemnly assure you I am not."

"Oh, then, there can be no harm, that I see!" she cried confidently. Alas! poor Mrs. Gillett, she had but skin-deep knowledge of the human heart. Not seeing that what we should avoid, we fly to—what hate, generally love, if cast in our path—ties, vows, resolutions—all are things created, but to be immolated on love's altar.

"There she just is!" she exclaimed, looking from the window; "she's come round by the shrubbery into the fruit-garden, and Lady Dora's with her."

"Lady Dora!" he ejaculated, looking surprised, and going to the window.

"Come back, Master Miles, do, come back," she cried; "I wouldn't have Miss Minnie's cousin see you for the world, in here."

"Is that Miss Dalzell's cousin?" he again asked, gazing from his corner at the two wandering together at the end of a long walk. "Lady Dora Vaughan, Lady Ripley's daughter,—true," he added after a pause, talking aloud, "I have a faint memory of the name here; but boys do not recollect these things as in after years; the name seemed familiar to me in Italy."

"Lauks!" exclaimed Mrs. Gillett, "have you met Lady Dora before?"

"Yes," he answered hesitatingly; "but how is it, Mrs. Gillett, that I never met her or Miss Dalzell here before?" Alas! the man was in old familiar scenes, for-

getting that eight long dreary years of exile had been his.

"Why, you see, Master Miles—and lauk, if I a'n't forgettin' too, calling you Master—well, never mind, it's more homely: Miss Minnie will be only seventeen come next month, and eight years have gone by since——"

"True, true!" he hastily answered, interrupting her, "and Miss Dalzell was then but a little child"—he sighed, that man of eight-and-twenty felt so old.

"And Miss Minnie was seldom at home then. She lived almost entirely with Lady Ripley, for her ladyship's child's sake; but you must have seen her, too, Master Miles."

"Yes," he said thoughtfully; "I now recall, at times, a pretty little fairy thing flitting about the grounds and gardens when I came home; for *then* my first visit was ever here, to see you Mrs. Gillett, and good, kind Miss Dorcas, and to teaze your master and Miss Sylvia with my wilful spirits."

"Lauk, yes!" said she sadly; and the memory of all brought the joyous boy in so much bitter comparison with the outcast, saddened man, that Mrs. Gillett, kind at heart, began to cry.

"Come, come!" he said kindly taking her hand; "don't be sorrowful. I thank you for those evidences that I am not forgotten by all."

"Oh, not by me, Master Miles; but I've a hard card to play here amongst 'em all, and that hardens the heart—for they all want the same thing. They all wish Miss Minnie to marry some one of their own choosing, and, as

I say, she can't be a bigamy, and marry all, so there's no use wurrittin' her about it so."

"And does she not love any one?"

"Law bless you, no—not one more than t'other; my belief is, she likes her black mare 'Jet' better nor any of them."

Miles felt glad to hear this, for he had heard of none worthy of the fair girl who had been poor Mary's Christian support in her trouble. Even Skaife he did not deem fitting for that beautiful gem; she merited a more gorgeous setting than a homely curate's home could be. She was no longer as a stranger to his thought; he forgot the past eight bitter years of his life, and remembered himself a boy again, looking on a rosy, lovely child. Mrs. Gillett's doubts were all cleared away, and an open path before her. Age, and the prejudices of others, had made her regard Miles with fear, and almost aversion. Now the better influence of woman's nature prevailed, and she remembered him only as the comely youth she had once liked so much. Cranky people make others cross and disagreeable. She was accustomed to nothing but complaints from Juvenal and Sylvia, with a milder portion, in the way of advice required, by Dorcas; and thus she had had all the juices of her nature drying up beneath this fire of unhappy prognostications from all. With Miles she became almost young again, and fearlessly promised to procure him the desired interview, provided *no one knew it*, which he faithfully promised they should not, from him; and, while they were consulting how it should be accomplished, the girl herself

advanced to the window with her cousin. Miles drew back in a corner, and his heart beat for more reasons than one.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Gillett," said Lady Dora, in an affable tone. "You really improve in good looks every time we meet." Poor Mrs. Gillett was red as a peony with agitation, and could only utter, "Your ladyship's very good to notice *me!*"

"Gillett, dear," cried Minnie, in her girlish, ringing tone, "we are coming in to have a chat with you; put a chair for us to step on!"

"Not for the world, miss," almost shrieked the alarmed woman. "Oh dear! no; maybe you'll hurt yourself."

"Good gracious—no, Gillett! you know I always come in this way," and she stooped as if to enter.

"No, miss—oh dear, no!" continued the other, dragging away the chair in her terror. "I never will consent; it mustn't be."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed the amazed girl. The woman caught Miles's face; he was smiling. Altogether her position was so critical, she became doubly confused, and said something incoherent about "Lady Dora's dignity."

"I see what it is," said that lady. "Mrs. Gillett has forgotten the girl she used to scold once; so, Minnie, we will sit outside here, and I will make her better acquaintance as a woman," and the cousins, suiting the action to the word, sat down each on a garden-chair, which they drew close to the window. This was a thousand times worse than any position she ever had been in; no blind-

ness, no pattens, could save her here. She was not a free agent—What would they say? what do? and besides, the door was locked—should any one rap! It was the hour when the servants generally required her advice or presence to prepare for supper; her agony was intense. She durst not move lest Minnie should step in, using her own chair for that purpose. Every possible thought crossed her mind to terrify her—should Miles sneeze? and, in the midst of all this, Minnie began—

"Now," she said, "Gillett, I've come to scold you for your cruelty yesterday to poor Mr. Tremenhere."

Mrs. Gillett was seized with a violent fit of coughing; could *any* subject more terrible under circumstances have been selected? Miles was all attention.

"You've a bad cough," said Lady Dora, kindly, for her; but she wanted Minnie's homely warmth of speech.

"Th-an-k you-r la-dy-ship, I ha-ve," coughed the woman.

"You should be careful at your age," continued the other. "Colds are the forerunners of all disease, they say."

"So o-ur doc-tor tel-ls me," uttered the housekeeper, perplexed how to keep up the cough; "and he sa-ys I sh-ou-l-d avoid dr-aughts!"

"And here we are," cried the feeling Minnie, "keeping you in one." She rose hastily. Mrs. Gillett began in all gratitude, thanking her lucky star for taking them away, as she supposed that luminary so intended to do; when, lo! at that instant, a hand tried the lock, then rap—rap—rap, succeeded—then Sylvia's voice! The house-

keeper was nearly frantic. She hurried half-way to the door, then returned. Miles stood perfectly still and composed.

"I'll go round by the garden, Minnie," said Lady Dora, rising. "Don't remain long with Mrs. Gillett," and she turned away with her slow, majestic walk. Minnie put her chair in at the window, stepping in like a cat upon it. Gillett indistinctly saw all this; she wrung her hands, hurried to the assailed door, opened it, slipping through a crevice she would have dreamed an impossible feat of performance an hour before, and speaking loudly as she did so.

"Oh! Miss Sylvia, I'm so flusterated I don't know what I'm a-doing of; there's a strange cat come into my room, and gone into a fit—don't go in!" she screamed, as the courageous Sylvia attempted to do so. "It will bite, maybe! I'll lock it in; the window is open—it will go as it comed, I daresay!" and, suiting the action to the word, she tremblingly turned the key, which she had taken outside with her. Presence of mind is woman's greatest gift.

CHAPTER IX.

"THEY must settle it between them," she muttered to herself as she did so. "After what he told me, I ain't afeard of him! And very fortunate it is, to be sure, that he should be thinking of another, or else he'd be sartain to fall in love with Miss Minnie, and *that* wouldn't do!" And, consoling herself in her error, she trotted down the passage after Sylvia.

"Gillett—Mrs. Gillett!" cried Minnie, flying across the room to the closing door; "let me out!"

But the door was locked in an instant. Sylvia had turned away, and Gillett followed, blessing herself for the clever manner in which she met poor Miles's wishes (for she really liked him,) without actually compromising herself by arranging a meeting. Minnie turned, and was going out by the window, as she had entered, wondering much at the housekeeper's strange behaviour, when, in turning, she beheld Miles. She started back, uttering a half scream.

"Pray, do not be alarmed, Miss Dalzell," he said, advancing courteously—"'tis I, Miles Tremenhere, here, and with Mrs. Gillett's consent; may I speak a word to you?"

"*You* here, Mr. Tremenhere—and with Mrs. Gillett's connivance?"

"I here, Miss Dalzell—you may indeed be amazed; but pray, pardon my audacity, but I have something to tell you, for which reason I am here. May I act most unceremoniously in your own house, and offer you a chair?"

She bowed as he did so, and seated herself, though in much perplexity of thought.

"I would speak to you," he said seriously, standing beside her, "of one you take an interest in."

"Mary Burns!" she cried. "Oh! pray be seated, and tell me of her. I went to the cottage at six this morning, but it was vacant."

"Did you, indeed!" he exclaimed, gazing in deep admiration upon the lovely face raised to his in confidence and innocence. "I wish I had divined that; how very good you are, Miss Dalzell!—this will much gratify poor Mary, she is so crushed and bowed down."

"Oh! do not say I am good; 'tis a sacred duty we owe a distressed fellow creature. We should not trample upon the fallen, lest they rise against us, and themselves in bitterness: where is she, Mr. Tremenhere?"

But Tremenhere's thoughts had changed their current; might he not be pardoned for seeking a motive to interest in his fate that young heart? Within the last half hour he had been searching the haunts of memory, and she had given him back a sunny day, ten long years gone by.

"It is a great tax on a memory so young as yours,

Miss Dalzell," he said, without having even heard her question, "to ask it to look back ten years; can you recall the time when you were seven years of age?"

"Oh, well!" she answered unhesitatingly, as if she had known him all the intervening space between that, and the present. "I had never quitted home then, since when, I have been much at Loughton, with my cousin Dora; but I remember that happy time well. I was a very, very joyous child. They say, those kind of children know much and early trouble; but I don't believe that--do you?"

"Heaven keep you from it!" he energetically said, "*I* was a *very* happy boy."

Minnie looked up in his handsome face, and her bright blue eyes clouded over—"Poor Miles Tremenhere!" she thought.

"You used to ride," he continued, "on a pretty grey pony, and a large dog always followed it."

"Yes!" she answered amazed; "and old Thomas, my uncle's coachman, walked beside me; but how do you know this, Mr. Tremenhere?"

"One day," he replied, "a young man's horse ran away with him, in the long lane skirting your grounds at Gatestone, and upset the grey pony and its pretty burthen. As soon as he recovered the command of his horse, he returned and found the little girl, not hurt, but very much frightened; so he dismounted and took the pretty child on his knee, and her little arms clung round his neck, as she assured him she was not hurt. He often thought of that sweet girl, and her long flaxen curls;

but somehow, he lost her recollection, amidst the waves of the troubled life he afterwards was doomed to. He only found it again, half an hour ago; then he again saw, as now he sees in Memory's magic glass, that sweet infant face, the little arms so confidently round his neck, and the kiss she gave him on both cheeks. *I* was that young man—man *even then,—you,* that pretty loving child, Miss Dalzell."

Minnie was rosy red to her very brow as he spoke of that kiss; then with a native grace, all her own, she held out both her tiny hands, and all smiles as he grasped them, said—"Oh, Mr. Tremenhere! I *do remember* it; I am so delighted we have met before this sad time to you; it gives me a right to defend, and think well of you."

What would Mrs. Gillett have said, had she seen Miles's dark moustache pressed upon Minnie's lovely hands, in speechless gratitude?

"I don't know how it happened," he said, after a moment's silence; "but there was but little intimacy between our families. *I* came frequently here, but then I rambled every where; moreover, I had, and have, a passion for my pencil, and strolled about the grounds, sketching every thing, I had so many favourite old trees and sites here."

"And do you sketch now? have you any of these? I should much like to see them."

"Yes, I sketch still, and, more than that, I paint, chisel my thoughts in marble—all."

"What a delicious pastime!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"'Tis more than that to me," he answered, and a cloud passed over his brow; "it is *now* a profession to me—one ardently pursued, for a motive hallows it!"

"Your mother!" she uttered.

"Thank you, for that good, sympathetic thought, Miss Dalzell. I may freely speak to you—we are not strangers in soul—I feel *that*. Yes; my mother—my good, pure, calumniated mother! I have vowed every energy of my life to one cause—the re-establishment of her fame. Only money can do it: I am poor: I have powerful and rich enemies to fight against; but patience, if wealth is to be gained, I will win it; and then there is not a corner of the wide world I will leave unsearched, till I prove her to all, what I know her to be. Every thought of my soul is in this good work."

"Oh, may Heaven prosper so pure a wish!" she cried. "Would that I were rich! I would say, Mr. Tremenhere, for the sake of a sister woman's fame, let me join you in this holy deed."

Minnie spoke in all the enthusiasm of her gentle, but energetic nature; and as she desired, so would she have done, had fortune willed it. Tremenhere's outcast heart was in fearful danger; had she sought through all Cupid's quiver for an arrow the most deadly, she could not have found one better, than this interest in his mother, to win Miles's affections. For some moments they did not speak; he felt that the weakness creeping over him must be checked. His cause was too sacred a one to be relinquished, like a second Marc Anthony's, for woman's love. And what Cleopatra could ever have

ranked in power with Minnie Dalzell? He felt this, and changed the subject, telling her that Mary and her mother had that day quitted Yorkshire for London, to avoid persecution. It was a delicate subject to touch upon to Minnie, therefore he did so as lightly as possible; but not so much so but that she discovered, to her increased horror of him, that Marmaduke Burton had been Mary's betrayer. But time flew—it flies ever when we require its stay—it flies, carrying with it our joys and smiles; and oh, how it lingers over our tears! Bathed in them, its wings know no vigour or volition. Minnie would gladly have remained longer; but she knew her absence would shortly cause inquiry and search. Miles durst not solicit another meeting; for how excuse the request? What interests had they in common, now Mary was gone? Alas! none, which either might avow. Little as they were acquainted, it was a moment of regret to each, when, without a word asked of future hope, or promise given, Miles stepped through the window, in the now deepened shades of evening—almost night. He could but thank and bless her gentle heart, and say, how truly! that he never should forget her kindness and confidence,—that he probably, on the following day, should be far from Gatestone; but, at her request, he would send some sketches to Mrs. Gillett for her, in memory of their meeting; and one should be of their first one. Twice he turned to say good-bye; and the last time he lingered, and lingered, over the little white hand, on which the lip, though half in fear, fell at last; and he bade Heaven bless her, for his mother's

sake. She watched his tall figure as he strode through the garden—then the night concealed him from her view—she crept to the window and listened, but the footsteps were lost on the turf; and here Mrs. Gillett turned the key in the door, and entered. Minnie turned hastily round.

"Is he gone?" asked the woman, in a whisper.

"Yes," uttered Minnie sadly. "Poor man—poor creature! Oh, Gillett, what a wicked man Marmaduke Burton is!"

"Is he? Oh! may be not—he thinks he's right; may be he is, may be he isn't—who can say?" Policy had stepped in again, her handmaiden. "One thing I'm very glad of, Miss Minnie, that Mr. Miles is an engaged man."

"Engaged!" cried the girl, surprised; "to whom?"

"I don't know, but he solemnly assured me he was, or else be sure I wouldn't have consented to his seeing you alone. People soon fall in love—I know *I* did with poor, dear Gillett; but I never knew it till he fell out of the apple-tree, and dessicated his shoulder. And I'm sure, when they strapped him down in the chair, to pull it back again, (it was sadly put out,) I felt in such an agonized state, as if vultures were feedin' on my vitals! Ah! that's true love, Miss Minnie—I hope you may never know how sharp its tooth is, for it gnaws through every barricade, as one may say."

Minnie was in deep thought, thinking and wondering what sort of person Miles loved: Was she dark?—fair? and, above all, did she love him *very much?* She

thought—indeed, she was sure—that she should love such a man! In a very meditative mood, she entered the drawing-room.

Miles sped away across fields, once his, to the homely farmer's, (Weld,) where, we have said, he had taken up his abode. He, too, was in deep cogitation; his mind filled with thoughts of Minnie. With an artist's eye, he remembered every outline of her lovely face and form: there was something so seraphic in it: for a while it obliterated all bitterer memories—cousin, mother, all. Then, as he awoke from a day-dream of what might *possibly* have been, a double flood of indignation and hatred rushed through his heart towards Marmaduke. "I would have willingly shared all with him," he cried aloud, "so he had left me name, and *her* fame; with these I might *perhaps* have won——" He paused. "Lady Dora her cousin, too! strange I should never have thought of *that!* But, then, 'tis ever so; we sit down contentedly under a happy influence of sunlight, unquestioning whether it will last, or wherefore it shines, whence it comes. *That* would have been the maddest dream of any. Proud! oh, Juno herself fabled Juno not prouder! There were many things in that girl I could not fathom: Was she really so proud? or, Had her heart a softer feeling beneath that mantle? or, Was it merely woman's love of enchaining, which made her so gentle, yielding, *almost* loving, only to frown down upon the half-uttered hopes her manner gave birth to? I remember the day she was leaving; I am not a vain man, but assuredly there was a tear in her

eye, and the hand, for the first time, touched mine—how cold her's was! *That* was vanity. Her manners piqued me, her beauty dazzled; but I forgot her a week afterwards, and worked at the statue for which she had been my model, as calmly as if no line of it were drawn in vain imitation of her matchless grace. But I forgot *her!*—could I forget Miss Dalzell?" He was silent for a long time, and walked onward in thought. "I will leave this place," he said at last, speaking aloud—that habit which denotes the lonely man—speaking aloud, not to forget the *tone* of a human voice. "I will leave this, and then forget that sweet, fair face; I cannot allow my heart the luxury even of that thought. I require all its energies—it must be vigorous, Miles, vigorous, for it's worldly encounter, not enervated by love! Pshaw! leave love to boys—I am a man—a sad, stricken man—what have I to do with love? Why, my hair will be silvering soon, and how might I mingle such, with those glorious wreaths of golden shade, as she lay on my bosom! Away, away!" he cried, groaning deeply. "This is a devil's vision, to tempt me aside, from duty to a saint! What a beautiful thing nature is!" he continued, after a pause. "What act of art, however gorgeous her colouring, could compete with that one—so beautiful—so pure—so perfect—when Minnie Dalzell put her two fair hands in childish confidence in mine!" Again he walked on in silence, and as he entered Farmer Weld's door, he muttered, "I will leave this place to-morrow!"

The morrow rose. Does she in rising lay in her lap,

and survey all the deeds of the day? or is it an act at eve, when retiring? In either case, how she must sigh over those of omission and commission, and regret that she should be the involuntary parent of them all! She rose, and with her Lady Dora, earlier than usual; she looked thoughtful, pale, and irresolute. Were these caused by Minnie—who had spent two good hours the previous night in her dressing-room, confiding to her cousinly ear all about Miles Tremenhere? Dora had listened, and Minnie was too little accustomed herself to conceal her feelings, to note the painful struggle the other had, to be in seeming quite calm. Much she argued with Minnie—mere cold, worldly motives, for not seeing Miles, for refusing to do so *peremptorily*, should he seek her; as if Minnie could do any thing in a peremptory manner, especially a thing calculated to wound this fallen man! Dora found her resolute, however, in one way—not to do so, but leave all to chance. He was going—she pitied him—always had done so since she heard his story. She hated Marmaduke Burton—always had—and would now, more than ever—*she would.* In vain Dora spoke of position; he was rich, Minnie had nothing, and her aunts were resolved she should settle near them. "Well, they cannot force me to marry at all," answered she; "so I'll die an old maid, or rather live one first, with dear aunt Dorcas."

But Dora could gain no promise about Miles Tremenhere.

"I may never seek him," said Minnie. "I'm not in love—oh! not at all; but, if we *do* meet, I will hold

out my hand if the squire and all the household are by to see! Has he not known me since I was seven years of age? and do you think I am going to turn away from a friend because he is poor? No, cousin dear, I wish I were a man, I'd fight for Miles Tremenhere—poor fellow!"

It is questionable whether, had she been one, she would have blushed so deeply, and spoken so enthusiastically, though her generous nature would have made her uphold the wronged. A handsome man is very dry fuel near a young lady's warm heart—her enthusiasm soon glows into a blaze.

CHAPTER X.

Our readers must not suppose that Lady Dora Vaughan was in love with Miles Tremenhere. The outcast of society could never find a cherished home in a heart so proud as her's. True, we cannot always command our feelings; but we can check them. Her's towards him were, more bordering on hate than love—And why? because she had *nearly* loved, and her pride revolted so much against her weakness, that dislike towards the object had followed; still, her sensations were far from agreeable. Do as she might, she could not despise the man; she was bound to admire, and even while doing so, feel that it would be worse than any marriage with age or decrepitude (rank and wealth of course accompanying them,) to love this noble-hearted man, simply because the laws of society condemned him as an outcast, for his mother's supposed error. And this frightful fault of pride, was the bane of a host of good qualities and virtues in Lady Dora. It marred them all; making her seem worldly, cold, and heartless, whereas a good, simple-minded mother would have created a jewel of price in this girl. She had met Miles in Florence—met him merely as an artist, whose rising talent

entitled him to portray her fine features for the admiration of posterity. As a very young man, when wealth and position were his, Miles had studied painting as an art to which inspiration called him. Sculpturing, too, he practised, but less than the other. Perhaps it was, next to his mother's wrongs, the severest blow of his unhappy fate, when he found himself driven from his studio at the manor-house, where his happiest hours had been spent. He had passed years of his life at different periods, since boyhood, in Italy, and studied with the best masters. When his troubles seemed to have quite overwhelmed him, after flinging back with scorn the hundred a year his base cousin dared offer him—as indeed he would have done thousands, from his, or any hand in charity—he had recourse to his talents for support. He returned to Italy; and now every energy of his genius was directed towards the acquirement of wealth, for the purpose we have shown. This was the man Lady Dora had sat to; and, though she did not admit the fact at Gatestone, she, but not her mother, had been perfectly aware that he was the once master of the manor-house. Even while under his pencil at Florence she had, struck by the name, sought his confidence, which he freely gave her—only from her mother was it withheld. Lady Dora never spoke of herself; imagining that every one must know her rank and family, she merely spoke of having been at Gatestone, and he inquired no farther. Under the mask with which pride concealed the working of her features and heart, Lady Dora had warm affections. Though she did not fully enter into the

merits of Tremenhere's case, neither did she believe that, had his mother been innocent, he could be so much wronged; still she felt much sympathy for one brought up in ignorance, so many years, and driven to the bitter extremity, as she deemed it, of earning his existence; not knowing, that the bread we honestly earn, is made sweeter to the palate, than that which comes to us from parents and kindred—the cold household bread, baked from our birth for us! The depth of thought, intelligence, and something above any one she had ever met, made her involuntarily bow before the commanding nature of this man. Of his plans or purposes she knew nothing; merely supposing that, like hundreds of other artists, he was earning his living. It was not to a girl like this one, that the sacred motive of all his acts would be confided. Still it was impossible to be thrown into the society of Lady Dora, and not admire her deeply, especially a man like this; for he was too keen an observer —a scrutinizer of all—not to perceive that under her pride lay feeling and depth of soul. Insensibly this cold man began to watch for the days of his visits at the Palazzo Nuovo, whither he went to complete the portraits of herself, and the countess; but it was to his studio Lady Dora came, accompanied by a waiting-woman, and sometimes her mother, to mark the progress of her marble statue; and here, in his own home, his household gods around him, Miles became so perfectly himself—at ease, graceful, and courteous in manner, such as few could be, none surpass, that insensibly Lady Dora felt her heart question her pride as to the

possibility of reconciliation; for with her they were two enemies at open war—still she was not in love. Surrounded by admirers—sought every where—chidden by her mother for her coldness—it was a bitter pang to her, the discovery that this painter-sculptor, for such he was, should give her heart an awakening start. At first she gave herself up to the enjoyment of a new sensation; then, when she discovered how dangerous the feeling might become, she drew back into her shell, which lay outwardly cold and empty; whereas within beat a warm heart. Tremenhere, however, guessed a part of the whole. There is a look, not to be mistaken, in the downcast lid which lowers over the traitor glance—there is the young blood, which will rush up rejoicing to the cheek. No caution can check this tide, no dam limit its flow. More than once her blush had made his heart question itself; and though that heart acknowledged a warmer feeling than towards a mere acquaintance, still it's joy was not full, the cup was not filled to overflowing, nor any thing resembling it. Lady Dora had passed a sleepless night after the conversation with Minnie. Minnie she had loved as a child—loved her now as a girl; moreover, she was a part of herself, her flesh and blood—degradation to one, would necessarily fall upon the other; and knowing, as she knew the fascination of Miles, even acting upon herself—the girl accustomed to society and adulation—she doubly dreaded it in the case of an unsophisticated girl like her cousin. Lady Dora, we have said, arose, it was about seven o'clock, a thing most unusual for her to do. She dressed herself with-

out the attendance of her maid, and after a moment's thoughtful pause, put on a close straw-bonnet and shawl, and, opening her door gently, crept down-stairs. It will be remembered that Lady Dora had often been, as a child, a resident at Gatestone; consequently, under the unavoidable influence of Mrs. Gillett, the presiding goddess of the house. To her room, through the gardens, Lady Dora resolved to go, as if accidentally in an early walk, and implore her not to countenance in any way the inter-communication of Minnie and Tremenhere. Poor Lady Dora quite forgot, or disbelieved, that there is a communion of kindred spirits on earth, and that vain is all earthly power to separate them. Thinking on various things in deep cogitation, she skirted the gardens, passed through the shrubbery, and was on the point of entering the fruit-gardens leading to Mrs. Gillett's window, when she suddenly paused. Through an opening of the majestic trees in the long walk called the shrubbery, she saw in the distance a man's figure. He was slowly walking in the holly-field before alluded to. She drew near the hedge separating the grounds from this last named, and looked earnestly through the interstices of the hedge; he was evidently strolling about, on nothing especial bent. She paused in thought. "Was he, could he, be expecting any one? if so—— Surely not Minnie? oh, no! she was too candid and retiring to deceive, or be guilty of such an act on so slight an acquaintance." These questions answered, her decision was soon made; it was far better to speak to him candidly, than through any servant

attain her object. Her pride made her sufficiently self-relying, and placed her on too high a pedestal to fear, as a merely ordinary girl of her age might have done. Thus resolved, she returned on her footsteps, and walking hastily through the grounds, opened a small door leading to the fields, and without further hesitation proceeded straight towards the man, as matinal as herself; whom, at a glance, she had recognized, as Tremenhere. He, too, had passed a restless night—a thing to him of frequent occurrence; poor Miles had much to banish sleep from his pillow, at all times. He never stayed to woo Morpheus, but rose at once, however early it might be, in Aurora's reign. He had been up nearly two hours, and something impelled him to visit this path, remembering that one day's hour of waking, generally is succeeded by a parallel act, next morning. Minnie had been across these fields at six the previous day, and might she not do the like this? So much worth was his resolution to quit the spot, and see her no more. His back was however, now turned from Gatestone, and he sat upon a stile watching busy nature; he was too sad to sing, or he would have united his voice with the tone of the lark, and busy bee, as they rose above, or flew past him. No! he sat in thought. Lady Dora's light step was unheard; it might have been a flying hare's, 'twas so gently placed on the grass; a cough, however, startled him, and then a cold untrembling,

"Mr. Tremenhere, pardon my interruption of your reverie, but may I speak to you?"

"Good heavens! Lady Dora Vaughan!" and he was beside her.

"You naturally feel astonished at my being here, Mr. Tremenhere," she coldly said, after an obeisance of the body which placed a barrier like the Jura mountains between them—"precipitately steep." "But I was walking in the gardens, and perceiving you, have come without hesitation, well assured that you can place no false construction on the otherwise hazardous act."

"Lady Dora must be fully aware that presumption, or self-appreciation *above* what I deserve, is not a fault of mine; what I am, I know—*more*, I never shall seek to be."

He was to the full as proud as herself in word and look; she felt his meaning, and thought they stood *equal* in mental strength; but his was the real, sterling pride, grounded on uprightness of cause—hers, the worldly thing, born by accident of birth; but, like many unreal things, it looked as pure as the other to the eye.

"Believe me, Mr. Tremenhere, I do full justice to you in all things. I feel so much sympathy for a position so painful as yours, especially as it must be here, in this neighbourhood."

He merely bowed. She scarcely knew well how to enter upon the subject of Minnie; even to her undaunted mind, it was a most difficult one. "May I ask," she said at last, "without a seeming impertinence, foreign to my thought, whether your stay will be greatly prolonged here?"

He stood surprised; but, fixing his gaze upon her cold,

impassive face, he read nothing to point a suspicion of any personal interest on her part.

"May I inquire your ladyship's motive for the question? I shall then, possibly, be better enabled to reply with brevity and decision to it, as I presume the dew still lying on the grass, induces you naturally, to abridge this visit, as much as possible, once its motive explained. I regret I cannot offer a more agreeable place of rest, than the grassy turf."

"Thank you, Mr. Tremenhere. I like the country—its walks and associations."

"Indeed! I thought I remembered other opinions in Florence; but we all are liable to change. Let us hope it may ever be for the better, as your decision for the sweet country and rural nature decidedly is."

"We will walk, if you please," she coldly replied, moving onwards. They had been standing near the stile: there was another awkward pause.

"Mr. Tremenhere," she said at length, hastily, "I was made acquainted last evening by my cousin, Miss Dalzell, with her extraordinary meeting with yourself. 'Tis of that I would speak."

"Extraordinary! Lady Dora—why extraordinary? I naturally wished to see an old acquaintance of boyhood, Mrs. Gillett. I have bad taste; but the humble have often charms for me beyond many more sought after. Then I had a message to give, which only Mrs. Gillett might be charged with; then—I confess my audacity towards *your* cousin, I had an earnest desire once more to behold Miss Dalzell, and thank her for her

candidly expressed and warm sympathy with a *now* disregarded man—one drooping, but not *crushed*, Lady Dora."

The woman's heart softened at this tone; it was one of so much noble pride, and knowledge of his rights. Her voice was gentler as she said—

"Whatever your misfortunes may have been, or are at this moment, I most sincerely——"

He bowed, and interrupted her. "Your ladyship, I think, came here to speak on some subject more interesting than my wrongs, I believe; pardon me for reminding you of it."

She bit her lip. She saw that every word uttered in the pride of her heart at Florence, when he had almost dared to speak of love, was remembered against her.

"I thank you for recalling me to my immediate business in being here, Mr. Tremenhere. I *know* I am speaking to a man of the highest honour."

"You only do me justice," he replied. "'Twas born with me from *both* parents."

"I would speak to you of my cousin, Miss Dalzell, and implore you to quit this neighbourhood, or else avoid any further meeting with her." Lady Dora committed a grievous error. She should not have permitted such a thought to intrude upon her, as the possibility of her cousin degrading herself, as she deemed it would be, by any attachment to Tremenhere; still less should she have allowed him to imagine such a thing within the nature of probability, as Minnie ever returning any affection of his. She had opened a door in his heart, difficult

to close again; certainly *she* could not accomplish it. Naturally he asked himself, "What had Miss Dalzell said of him, so much to alarm her cousin?" And through that open gate passed many sweet hopes into the lone man's heart.

"May I ask," he said hastily, "whether your ladyship comes *from* Miss Dalzell thus requesting?"

"You cannot imagine, sir," and she drew her proud figure up, "that my cousin could be unwomanly enough to make so strange a request—implying fear of herself? No; *I* fear for her, only because she is a warm-hearted girl. Her sympathies are awakened for you; her uncle and aunts have chosen otherwise for her; a marriage with you would be most distasteful to them *on that account*," she hastily added, to soften the real meaning of her heart, which she had nearly betrayed in her haste. She would not wilfully pain any one. "And by some unfortunate event you have met. It is paying you a compliment to say I fear for her."

"Paying *me* a compliment," he sternly replied, "at the expense of one whose memory I revere. Were I the acknowledged master of the manor-house, my visits as a suitor would not be less pleasing than those of my worthless cousin, Marmaduke Burton. As it is, Lady Dora Vaughan ought to know how little there is to be feared from myself in attaching any one; for, let my station be what it may, the heart knows of none, and for one worthy of its love, will fearlessly speak. Thus, then, there cannot really exist in your ladyship's mind the fear your words express. You have *proved* how, in all

confidence, I may be trusted near disengaged hearts. I will conclude some kinder motive impelled you to seek me to-day—some old scenes to recall to memory—*together* to speak some friendly word, which will bear repetition—something in short of the past; or a friend, to inquire about. All are well, I believe; were, when I left. Lord Randolph Gray perfectly recovered from his fall, though they say, from some hidden cause, sad at heart. Or it may be only an artistic visit this,—has your ladyship's portrait grown pale? Colours fade sometimes, however much we may have endeavoured to make them proof against so great sacrilege, to a lovely original. Shall I call, when in the neighbourhood of Loughton Castle, and retouch it? or will your ladyship send it to the artist's studio in town? I wait your commands."

All this was uttered in a tone of *badinage,* leaving her abashed and speechless. How she despised herself for having ever allowed a momentary weakness of heart at Florence, to leave a dream on that man's mind that she had almost loved him. How she hated him for having excited that affection, and *now* even forcing her to respect him. In her self-abasement, she would have rejoiced in proving *him* base, that she might banish him, as she then could, from her thoughts. And, as the last pain is ever keenest, she more than all else deplored her ill-advised morning walk. She felt she had injured her cause, and, resolving to abridge this meeting, also came to the decision of watching over Minnie, and imploring her

Aunt Dorcas to reason with her. How people hurry on events by too much forethought, sometimes.

"I fear," she answered, after a moment's pause, stopping in her walk with a frigidity of manner which would have convinced many of their first error in supposing she had even dreamed of love. But Tremenhere was not a superficial observer. "I fear, Mr. Tremenhere, that you totally mistake my meaning and intention. Lest a greater error than the first should ensue, we will, if you please, stop here in our conversation. I trust I misjudge my cousin's warm heart, and that it will never lead her into an act which would deprive her of all her friend's sympathy. Nay, do not take any personal offence; but she is too unsophisticated to trust her own judgment in all things."

"May I without offence say," said he, completely changing the conversation, and smiling blandly, "that I regret much your ladyship's portrait should have been entrusted to my care under the influence of a more southern sky? Assuredly there can be nothing in nature to equal the beauty of the dazzling English complexion!" And he gazed respectfully, but admiringly on her glowing cheek. She certainly was beautiful at that moment; many emotions combined to heighten the colouring of the fresh morning air. Again she bit her lip. This man had beaten her; and not alone doing it, but he knew he had done so, and made her feel it. She merely bowed; and as they turned in their walk, finding herself near the door entering Gatestone shrubbery,

stopped. Then for the first time her abased self-confidence made her dread lest any one should have seen her with him. What would be thought, said, reported? And in this unenviable state of mind, she took a cold, haughty leave of Tremenhere, who was smiling, and courteous in the extreme. As he replaced his hat, he turned away, and she hastily entered the grounds. Lady Dora almost forgot her dignity enough to hurry towards the house; perhaps she would quite have done so, had she seen Minnie concealed within the shrubs, with distended eyes, full of wonder, and a little regret, earnestly watching her. Poor girl! she did not know what to do or think. Her first movement had been to join Dora; then one of delicacy withheld her—the other evidently wished her visit unknown. Minnie had been matinal, too; and looking from her window before descending, *not* to seek Miles, but to walk in the fresh garden among dew and flowers, she saw Dora pass out. Deeming the other's motive like her own, she hastened her toilet, and just arrived in the shrubbery as Dora joined Miles at the stile. Him she knew at a glance; then her heart questioned, "What are they to each other?" She knew they had met. Had she been confiding her admiration of him to one who loved him? one perhaps beloved? She would ask Dora—no, she would wait till they were alone—Dora would surely speak of the morning's walk. So in this final decision Minnie paused, and, unseen by the other, followed her to the house, where they shortly after met at breakfast.

"Dora, you are late," said Minnie, as she entered the breakfast parlour.

"Yes," was the reply, "we sleep well in country air."

"She will tell me when we are alone," thought Minnie. And when that occurred, and the other kept silence of lip, and looked so thoughtful, Minnie felt sadly disappointed. Dora was not all candour, and her pure nature sickened at the worldly lesson. A first deception where we trusted, *often* mars a life; at all events, it taints life's current, and breeds suspicion—*frequently*, error, on our part.

CHAPTER XI.

Some one else had also seen Lady Dora—this was Aunt Sylvia. This busy, restless woman, had one decided affection—a love of gardening in all its branches. Her greatest crony after Dame Gillett, was John Gardener, as he had been surnamed, consequent upon his profession; for every thing is a profession now,—the humble trade eschews its name to become such, and professions, as they still are, are for the most part unmeaning words and falsehoods. Sylvia loved a garden, every atom of it,—kitchen, fruit, and flowers. She delighted in getting out *spudding* in it, as she termed it —a corruption of spading, we presume; but it was her own coined word, and meant, digging, weeding, sowing, and planting, a composite word of much meaning. This morning, like many others, she was up, and busily inspecting some little green tips just bursting through the earth, which she pronounced "loves of things;" when raising her head, to push back the spectacles she had put on for a closer inspection of her budding flowers, she saw Lady Dora pass through the little door into the fields. Her niece had not perceived her; she was bent double nearly, and in a grass-coloured muslin, which made her

appear, in the distance, like a heap of short, newly-mown turf on the lawn. Up she jumped at this vision. "My niece, Lady Dora!" she exclaimed—even in *thought* she was "Lady Dora" to her—"where can she be going? I declare the young ladies of the present day, have the oddest manner of creeping about early in the morning; no good ever can come of it!" Thus soliloquizing, she stole after her, and, to her amazement, saw a man in the distance; who it was, she had not the slightest idea, not once dreaming of Tremenhere. Startled at the responsibility of so great a secret to herself alone, she hastened through the kitchen-garden to Mrs. Gillett's window, and rapping hastily until she summoned that familiar spirit to her aid, she imparted all her surprise to her no less astonished ear. Mrs. Gillett was literally lost in wonder; for she at once suspected that Tremenhere was the man, though she kept her suspicions to herself. This, then, was his engagement to which he had alluded; but how had it come about. She knew nothing about the portrait and Florence, or all would have seemed clear as noonday. In deep perplexity, with Sylvia's aid she mounted on a chair; and thus getting into the garden, accompanied her to the end of it, where they might, through the thick hedge on that side, see beyond. It was thus Minnie escaped seeing them, or their observing her.

"Can you imagine who the creature is?" (*man* she meant,) Sylvia asked.

"He's come a purpose!" ejaculated Gillett, pursuing

her own private thoughts, not heeding the other's question.

"Who has come on purpose?" asked Sylvia, impatiently.

"Why, he, miss—you know who I mean. Lauks-a-mercy me! here 'll be a to do! Lauks-a-mercy! and my lady, too!"

"Good gracious, Mrs. Gillett! will you tell me what you mean? Will you tell me what you mean?—who's that man?"

"Why, Mr. Tremenhere, to be sure!" answered the other, amazed at the question. Sylvia was silent. In the bottom of her heart she felt something like pleasure; she hated all men, *pour cause*, as the French so impressively say. She hoped some one would shoot this one for his audacity—he deserved it; then, too, she even felt a something of jealousy towards Lady Ripley, for marrying at all when she remained single, and especially an earl. She had a sort of idea, that only a certain quantum of mankind was by fate allotted to each family, and that this one, by his exalted rank, had appropriated all, and bestowed it upon only one—else, why were she and Dorcas single? In this mood of mind, she rejoiced at any thing to lower Lady Ripley's pride, and resolved silently to watch the course of events, and be guided by them how to act. Accordingly she bound down Mrs. Gillett to profound secresy; and, having watched the two separate at the garden gate, she entered the house by the back-door, leaving her confidant more puzzled than ever what to do, finding herself the repository of

so many opposite secrets, and fearing events, should they clash in any way. Sylvia noticed every turn in Dora's countenance at breakfast, and, without surprise, listened to a half-smothered sigh. All seemed as clear as day to her idea. There was a private communication existing between Miles and Lady Dora; that was why he had come so unexpectedly to the neighbourhood—she was the magnet. She was in a mood to hate all—rejoice at any annoyance to others; for it was a little wounding, after all the trouble she had taken to bring about events, to see her pet, Mr. Dalby, quietly resigning, as was the case, his pretensions to Minnie's hand. Dalby was a prudent man, and, seeing the girl's evident repugnance towards himself, wisely said, "I shall never succeed; if I pursue her, I shall lose my friend—if I give her up at this stage of the affair, her dislike is not so apparent to others, but that the squire should owe me a debt of gratitude for withdrawing in his favour—I'll choose the squire!" Accordingly he resigned, and was once more reinstated in Marmaduke Burton's favour as one in whom he could trust. It was a complete game of cross purposes with almost all, under cloak of which the ones most interested passed comparatively unnoticed. One thing Lady Dora had accomplished by her morning walk. Miles Tremenhere turned thoughtfully away, and the result of his cogitations was a determination to remain some short time longer at Farmer Weld's—he must do so—had he not promised Minnie a sketch of Gatestone, and the surrounding scenery? In common politeness he must remain; so "common politeness,"

like many other things, bore the burthen which of right belonged to another—"inclination." Some days passed away. Lady Ripley spoke of shortly leaving for town. Dora had never spoken of her walk to Minnie, and she, grieved and wounded at this reserve, firmly resisted all manœuvring on the other's part to discover her thoughts about Tremenhere. Marmaduke Burton was a constant visiter: he paid court to Lady Dora, in order (he thought) to pique Minnie. The fact was, Lady Dora's species of hatred towards Tremenhere made her, even though he could not see it, rejoice in showing favour to his rival cousin. This gave a zest—a sort of dreamy hope to his attentions; though in reality liking Minnie better, he would have preferred her proud, titled cousin: this was the man's meanness. Juvenal rejoiced, for both were his nieces, and, either way, his pet squire would be happily mated. Mr. Skaife was absent from the village for a while; so Dorcas looked on, in happy ignorance of much; whilst Sylvia, in the greatest error of any, held consultations with Mrs. Gillett, whose mind was nearly distracted by many confidences, and whose only consolation amidst all was, that, "most fortunately, Master Tremenhere didn't love Miss Minnie, so she was safe; and no blame could ever attach to her (Mrs. Gillett) for connivance in their meetings!"

Nearly two weeks passed thus, and Minnie sat alone in her own little room, where we first saw her; but the door is bolted, and she is sitting at the table in the centre of that room, on which several sketches in crayon are displayed. One little white hand supports her

head, which is bent over these, and these represent, with a bold master-stroke, "Gatestone," seen from north, south, east, and west. Then there are sites and majestic trees, ruins and ivy-covered walls; all the most beautiful views on the banks of the Nidd are spread before her, over which her eyes wander; but the little white fingers close on one, and she raises it up, and looks almost tenderly upon it. 'Tis the sketch of a little girl on a pony, a large dog beside her, and leaning on the neck of the former animal is a tall young man. "Very like him even now," whispered she; "but what a little thing I was then! and to think he should have remembered it! Poor, dear Miles Tremenhere!" and she pressed the card-board to her lip. Was it the little girl's effigy she kissed? in truth, we fear it must be owned such was not the case. Moreover, our readers will perceive that Pity had strengthened her cause—he was "dear" as well as "poor" now. Lady Dora had much suffered from the various annoyances of her position: afraid to speak to Minnie, watching all, dreading all, and enraged with herself for a contradiction of feeling which would arise within her, despite every effort, when she thought of Miles. His pride had conquered her's: she had been foiled, and, in her discomfiture, she knew not where to seek comfort. Somehow, she could not banish him from her thoughts. She and her mother had left for a few days, on a visit near Ripon, and Gatestone had sunk into seeming peace. No one watched Minnie, she was in outward appearance as usual; but, while others planned for her, or permitted all care for

the present to rest, she was weaving her own fate, and not as a child weaves, flowers: there were many thorns set within that band, which would bind her, perhaps. Minnie, unwatched, walked and rode as usual; in the latter case, with the fat old coachman as attendant, who had followed her even in the time of the grey pony. Poor, old, half-blind Thomas!—what knew he of love, or love's various ways? And when, one day, Minnie left him in charge of her black mare at a wayside house, after first dropping her at the ruins of an old castle, where she was going to wander a while and sketch, some four miles from home—how could he possibly guess that she would scarcely be seated on a moss-covered stone, before another human being would be beside her, her hand gently pressed in his? All this was very wrong, but the grey pony commenced it years before. Early associations accomplish more in half an hour than recent acquaintances in months: the childish heart takes an impression freely. Minnie had become the little, fair baby thing again, whilst conversing with Miles; and how or when they had met again, after the evening in Mrs. Gillett's room, matters little; they met accidentally *on her part*, and, like a child, she held out her hands rejoicing; and it was not till more than one of these meetings had taken place, that she discovered

> "I am now no more a 'child,'
> And there's a gulf 'twixt thee and me!"

And in making that discovery, she also awoke to the fact in her case—a most unhappy one—that as a woman,

she loved. To whom could she tell that love? there was but one, Dora, and her secresy had engendered coldness. In the candour of her heart she had asked Miles why Dora had sought him that morning? but he merely attributed it to accident, and Dora's silence, made her convinced some other motive had induced her to seek him. Of his love towards herself she had no assurance—no promise—no pledge. She met him this day because he asked her to do so, to sketch with, and talk to him. More than once she had been on the point of telling "dear aunt Dorcas" all—her heart abhorred deceit; but then, when next she met Miles, he implored her so earnestly not to do so, that her lips became sealed; besides, until this day the meetings had been accidental—though hoped for, by her, watched for, by him.

"Minnie Dalzell," he said, "think what I should be here, were I prevented from seeing you; here I must remain a while. I have some business which forces my stay, and none to speak with but Farmer Weld's family; though good, excellent people, yet think how lost I should be without 'Baby Minnie' and her sketch-book to superintend and correct?"

And "Baby Minnie" feeling no harm to herself, certainly no wrong to another—held her peace "for pity's sake." "Should he ever say any thing more—more tender," she added, after a pause in her soliloquy, "then I'll tell aunt Dorcas!" Was it policy on his part not to startle, till he had secured, his timid bird? or was it that he really did not love her, that kept him silent? A little of both. He was not *quite* sure of his own heart; it had

been so bound up in the one great object of his life, that he feared lest he were incapable of loving Minnie as she should be loved; he was perfectly unselfish. Accustomed to deep suffering, he would rather have gone, leaving his love untold, and bearing even the charge, on her part, of being a mere trifler, than give her only a half affection. It was true his heart bounded when they met, and every moment in her absence was a thought of love for her. He walked alone, and conversed alone, to the spirit at his side, ever present with him; but he knew man's nature so completely under the control of his passions, that for her sake he resolved to prove his own heart before he offered it to her. If he felt he *ever* could change, or love another, then would he leave without awakening her to the knowledge of her own affection, which he saw, but looked upon as a fledgling, which, by some accident, might never take wing.

"Again here!" she said, on the day we have spoken of, in the old ruin. "Do you know this must terminate soon? Dora will return, and Mr. Skaife; and when he is here, Aunt Dorcas generally accompanies me, with him to escort us."

"But not riding. She is not a horsewoman, you say?"

"True; but Mr. Skaife, at her request, becomes my companion, then Dora will be with me every day."

"Do you mean, Miss Dalzell, that I am never to see you?" and something like a sigh escaped him.

"Oh! I hope not, indeed. I should feel grieved at so sad a termination to our many pleasant hours together; but what can be done to smooth our rugged path,

for we cannot disguise from ourselves that a very rugged one lies between us?"

"I never forget that! Would to heaven I could remove it! Time may—*will*, I should say," he cried, with energy; "but, to accomplish that glorious end, I must toil—toil—toil, and far away from this place, and——" he was going to say "you," he substituted "Yorkshire."

"'Tis very hard that, when we have known one another from childhood——"

"You forget I was a man *then* even."

"Well, then," she continued, "from *my* childhood, that we should be debarred from meeting freely; but why do you always correct me when I say *our* childhood? why are you so very anxious to make me remember that you are so much older than myself?"

"I say it, lest *I* should forget it."

"How do you mean? Where would be the harm?"

He looked at her so deeply, that her eyes fell beneath his glance, and she blushed.

"Where is your sketch-book?" he hastily said, looking away from her glowing face; but his eyes went lingeringly to other things.

"You have it in your hand! What are you thinking of, Mi—, Mr. Tremenhere?" she hastily substituted.

The sketch-book fell from his hand, and he grasped hers involuntarily, and the deep, dark eye grew full of passion, as it fixed itself on her face. "Call me," he whispered, "by that half-uttered name, and I will tell you why I always recall to my memory our difference of age."

But she was silent, trembling, and incapable of speech.

"*Do* say it; pray, utter it this once, and I will dare to believe you will not forget me—a poor, lonely man—when I go."

"I shall never forget you, Miles Tremenhere," she answered, gravely looking up. There was no blush or hesitation: there was only truth, and its ever accompanying fearlessness.

"Do you know, child," he exclaimed almost painfully, as he clasped her hand convulsively, "what you are doing this day? You are bending a strong, stern man, to womanly weakness; you are tearing every other thought from my heart, to engraft yourself there. Minnie, I have dreaded this moment; yet I had not the courage to fly you. I have said every day, 'To-morrow;' and that morrow has never come in which I could quit this neighbourhood."

"Hush!" she cried in alarm, looking round; "I heard a footstep." Her voice trembled with many emotions.

"There's no one here," he answered, scarcely glancing round. "It was perhaps my heart you heard beat; there are footfalls in that—those of remorse for my weakness—those of my mother's spirit deserting me; for I have sworn *only* to think of her. And yet, Minnie, do you know, amidst all this wild passion to-day, which your word, your utterance of my name, has called forth, I am not *sure* I truly love you! Were I certain of that, nothing could ever reconcile me to a separation from you. I would strain every nerve of my soul to make

you love me; and, loving thus, ask you to be mine—in toil and poverty perhaps—assured that *nothing* could surpass in misery, separation from each other."

"Is your heart more difficult for you to read, than mine is for myself?" she asked, looking up in childlike confidence. "Mine is an open page, I *know*——"

"Do not speak what you *think* you read there, Minnie; hearts are deceitful things, like words in dead tongues: we must search well, to define the real signification of things written there. Love has a counterfeit—passion. If I knew mine, purely, truly yours, worthy of you—or if I knew you truly loved me—there is not that power on earth which should part us!"

"Surely," she whispered, in terror grasping his arm, "there is some one in that archway, yonder—I heard a step!"

"No, 'tis fancy," he replied, looking round; "my earnestness has startled you, poor child—poor child, indeed, if you loved me!—an outcast, a wanderer. Forget all we have been saying, Minnie," he added, sorrowfully; "for be sure of this, if we *really* love, or are to love, some great event will call that affection to light—prove and hallow it; for it will be based on esteem, else you had not trusted me so far, nor I, been so confident towards you. Come, let us leave this old ruin; you are terrified to-day. I will see you outside of its huge walls, and then we must part; once on your black mare, with old Thomas beside you, you will forget this. Let us go, child; why, you tremble still!" and, more with

fatherly care than aught else, he drew her arm beneath his own, and they silently quitted the ruin.

"Now, will you doubt my perspicacity again, Formby?" cried Marmaduke Burton, stepping from beneath the dark archway, and dragging the half alive Juvenal after him. "I told you they met in secret. I wish we could have heard all they said."

"I'm horror-stricken!" shivered Juvenal, with genuine truthfulness. "What is to be done with her?"

"Lock her up! we'll soon hunt him out of this neighbourhood. Come out through this side-passage, my buggy's there; they must not know we heard them yet!"

CHAPTER XII.

MINNIE returned home at a quick gallop. She felt as if pursued by some visionary being. Not once did she pause or look back, after the one gentle wave of her hand to Miles, who stood statue-like, watching her, beside the old ruin, as she passed. Even poor, old Thomas could not extract a word from her, she flew so quickly homewards. On alighting from "Jet," she hastened to her own room, and, throwing off the hat which bound her brows, sat down to think, and thus she sat some silent moments; then rising gently, as though she had held communing with some spirit, she crept quietly about, as she changed her riding-suit for her ordinary one. When this was accomplished, she opened her door, and stealing down the passage, rapped at her aunt Dorcas's room. "Come in," answered the quiet voice which ever fell soothingly on her ear, and Minnie was in an instant beside her. A few desultory remarks passed about her ride, where she had been, etc.; to these Minnie replied with evident constraint. Dorcas at last noticed her manner, and, looking up from a purse she was knitting, exclaimed, "My child, are you not well? Why do you seem so much oppressed?"

This was all the young heart required to unburthen itself. She flung her arms round her aunt's neck, and burst into tears. "Dear, dear aunt!" she sobbed; "forgive me—forgive Minnie—for deceiving you, though not for long, dear aunt."

"My child, what do you mean? Good heavens! what has occurred?" and she folded her arms around her.

"Aunt, I have wickedly deceived you," sobbed the girl still; "I—I——." She was unable to continue for her tears.

"Tell me, Minnie, my own dear child; I forgive you before knowing," exclaimed the gentle woman. "I am sure you exaggerate some slight fault; be calm, tell me all: what do you mean?"

For some moments Minnie could not summon courage to reply; then at last, by a supreme effort, she confessed her many accidental meetings with Miles Tremenhere at first, and this one by appointment.

"Dear Aunty," she whispered, "I know now how very wrong it has been; but I feared telling you, lest you should betray me to the others. And though I know you will be just, they would not perhaps, but by coercion, endeavour to force me to their wills; they have spoken of such things, and I couldn't bear that!"

Dorcas was pained beyond measure. Her surprise left her speechless; for the suspicions instilled into Juvenal's mind by Burton, were strangers to her. Sylvia, we have seen, was on a wrong road altogether; thus, she had been kept in complete ignorance. She durst scarcely

question her niece: she feared lest some new sorrow might come to light—some positive engagement. In her alarm, she dreaded almost to hear that they were married. Minnie mistook her silence, and, clasping her again in her arms, besought her not to betray her. "I was so wretched in deceiving you," she cried; "but do not let my uncle, or aunt Sylvia, know; and oh, not Dora!" And she shuddered with a blind terror, not seeing the phantom of her fear: "They will lock me up, and be unkind, and harsh—I know they will; and then I will answer for nothing I may do!"

"Minnie, Minnie—my child—my own child, do not say such things—there," and she fondly kissed her; "be calm; you have done wrong, but no one shall know it, so you promise me never to meet him again without my knowledge."

"I promise all, aunt—my mother; for indeed you have been one to the motherless child. I never will conceal any thing again from you; and you won't tell Dora?"

"No one, Minnie; but why especially not Dora?"

Minnie looked down in thought. "It is not my secret," she said at last, looking in Dorcas's face; "but I will tell you, for I cannot understand it." And she related the morning's meeting between the two. Dorcas started! "Something of this Sylvia has hinted to me," she said; "how did she know it? I paid little attention to it, she fancies so many things."

"She must have been in the garden, too!" exclaimed

Minnie. It is a strange mystery; for Dora professes to hate him, and is always speaking against him to me."

"Beware, my child!" said her aunt, sadly; "men, they say, are deceitful. Take a lesson of what his father was; for we have *no proof*, however we may believe his mother innocent. Then his cousin, Marmaduke Burton, is a wicked, bad man." She thought of Mary Burns. "Wickedness often takes root, as a canker in a family: this Miles Tremenhere——"

"Oh!" cried Minnie, with a glowing face, "do not say he is a bad man, dear aunt, for my sake;" and she grasped her hand, and the eye filled with the tears of a noble soul defending an oppressed person: "he is all goodness—worth. Think to what he has devoted himself; but you do not know all." And here the quick tongue depicted all his wrongs—his labour of duty and love, for his mother's sake.

Dorcas sighed deeply. "Minnie," she said, "you love this man. Oh! promise me to see him no more. If really he love you, he will struggle for a good purpose *alone*. I will see him, and should he prove himself hereafter worthy of you, you are a mere child; well, you can wait for the proof of his affection, in his constancy."

Much more was said. Dorcas was lost in perplexity how to act for the best; she, the ignorant woman in all the affairs of the heart. One thing she promised, to see and calmly listen to Tremenhere; she was too truly just a woman to mar Minnie's happiness for any whim of her own. Much as she would have wished Skaife to be her niece's choice, she resolved to weigh all well; and if

Tremenhere hereafter proved himself worthy of the girl, to support their affections in every way. Still she hoped it was a merely passing fancy, which would soon, in absence, be forgotten by both; for he must shortly leave—this Minnie had assured her—and for the present there was nothing to fear. In this mood she dismissed Minnie fondly; and, closing her door, sat down to ruminate on what was to be done. As a last resource, she determined to confide in the confidant of all, Mrs. Gillett, and ask her advice; she, as a matron, might be enabled to guide her more ignorant thoughts in such matters. But with the worthy housekeeper her comfort was small. We have said that this good woman made a point of never betraying the confidence of one person to another; nevertheless, she reserved to herself the satisfaction of casting forth on the troubled waters around her, her innuendoes, which, as an invariable rule, troubled them still more. Thus she left Dorcas in the most uncomfortable state of doubt and fear, above both of which feelings there predominated a dread that Miles Tremenhere was a villain, trifling, for some unworthy purpose, with the affections of both her nieces, whom, by strange chance, he had become acquainted with. While she sat with Mrs. Gillett, Minnie was above in her room, much happier and light-hearted for the confidence she had made to her "dear aunty," and full of love and faith in Tremenhere. Lady Ripley and her daughter returned from Ripon, and thus diversified many gloomy thoughts and fears, by their presence. Minnie and Dora warmly embraced. Minnie's first

movement was all delight at seeing her cousin again; and Dora, the seemingly cold Dora, held her in her arms in one long embrace. But it was an *awkward* kiss—in the midst of it Minnie thought of Tremenhere and her cousin! A kiss should be all self-absorbing; the moment you are sufficiently collected to *think*, the embrace should cease, for the fire is extinct, and only ashes remain on the lip. Both girls simultaneously loosened their hold of one another, and turned away. Somehow, both actions arose from one cause—Miles. Dinner was over: Juvenal had been in a state of the greatest discomfort all the time; he ate little or nothing, snapped at every one. Dorcas was thoughtful; so was Minnie. Lady Ripley alone was in spirits; something had pleased her on her journey; she had learned that Lord Randolph Gray, whom she had mentally decided upon as Dora's husband, would shortly be in town. Dora was calm, though rather pensively disposed, when suddenly Sylvia awoke the bright blush in her cheek, and a displeased and amazed frown on her brow, by remarking, "Dora, you look paler than when you left us; I fear you have not taken your usually early walk before breakfast." And before any one could reply, asked, as if the previous sentence were allied to the latter question—"How far is it from Gatestone to Ripon?—I mean to —— Court, where you were staying?"

"About ten miles, I think, are there not, Dora?" said Lady Ripley.

"A mere canter for a gentleman before breakfast," observed Sylvia, before the other could reply. Several

looked embarrassed, for various reasons. Lady Dora was deeply confused, and evidently still more annoyed and amazed. Juvenal alone seemed a stranger to all conversation, only busy with his own thoughts. Now and then he looked at his watch, then at the door. At last, a horse's hoof sounded on the gravelled drive, outside the window; the bell rung, and, a few moments afterwards, Marmaduke Burton was ushered in. He looked paler than usual, and his hand trembled as he shook hands with all, but Minnie, who merely bowed; as she did so, he bit his lip, and a cold smile of triumph passed over his face. At that moment, the servant opened the door.

"If you please, sir," he said, addressing Burton, "the groom bade me say 'Viper' is not with your horse; and, as he always accompanies you, he thought you must have lost him."

"I have," answered the other, scowling malignantly; "he's dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Juvenal. "Why, you had him to-day!"

"True, Formby; never mind now—he's dead;" and he turned to Lady Dora, and made some commonplace remark.

Before we proceed further, we will step back to where Marmaduke Burton quitted the manor-house that evening, followed by his dog, in the good guardianship of which he had much faith. Juvenal had consulted with him on the best plan to be pursued as regarded Minnie; and it had been decided upon, that Marmaduke should

drop in, as if accidentally, in the evening, and that then her uncle should, thus fortified, lecture her before "a friend of the family," on her great imprudence. This was the very worst plan which could have been adopted with a girl of her spirit. Any thing just, might have been accomplished by kindness; but bad management, and too many to order and control, had deteriorated the character of an else perfect creature. Minnie was a little headstrong and wilful, having too much good sense blindly to submit to injustice. Burton anticipated the results: he really loved her as much as he could love; he thought, by judiciously taking her part, to win her gratitude—a great step, when he saw her every feeling went against him; and, should she be resolute in her rejection, from want of affection, or even toleration of him, perhaps a feeling of shame to know, that he might blight her good name elsewhere, by speaking of her secret meetings with Miles, might weigh with her prudence. Any thing, so he gained her, now more than ever, for he no longer could doubt a mutual attachment, though, perhaps, not very firmly knit, between her and his cousin. Thus ruminating, he quitted home on a bright summer's evening. The manor-house was about three miles, by the road, from Gatestone. His horse's rein was on its neck, his dog at the animal's heels, when suddenly a man, in a turning in the road, stood before him. One glance was sufficient for Marmaduke. Had he dared, he would have turned hastily homewards again; something like shame withheld him.

"Stop!" cried Miles, calmly standing before his

horse's head, and grasping the rein. "One word, cousin Marmaduke!"

"Unhand the rein!" exclaimed the other, "or I will spur the animal over you, fellow!"

"Pshaw!" said Miles, contemptuously, "you'll but unhorse yourself; I wish not to detain you long—a few brief words will suffice; do not be alarmed, I have come without a cudgel to-night, so hear me quietly."

"I swear to you!" cried Burton, though his voice slightly trembled with an alarm Miles ever inspired him with. "Unless you loosen your hold, and let me pass, I will do as I said—one prick of my rowel in his flank, and this good servant of mine will pass over you; but I do not wish to harm you."

"No; or else you would bid your familiar there at your side, attack me!"

Burton in his terror had forgotten Viper, who stood at his side, shewing his range of huge tusks, ready at a word to spring upon Miles, whom he knew for an enemy. Burton raised his hand in signal.

"Stop him!" cried Miles, still grasping the horse firmly. "I would not kill the brave brute, but I tell you I am prepared to do so—for hear me you shall. I mean no violence, I have never interfered with you, save when your coward acts obliged me; leave me in peace, and I will not war with you, except on our day of retribution, *for it will come*—but I have something to say to you to-day——"

Before he could complete the sentence, at a quiet signal from his master, Viper flew at his throat; at the

same moment, Marmaduke gave the rowel into the horse's flank, which sprang forward. This spring threw Viper back, or else the day had been Burton's in flight, for the dog aimed at the other's throat. Miles was firm, and on his guard against treachery. The dog reeled with a blow from the horse's shoulder; Miles drew the rein with a jerk, which almost brought the animal on his haunches, and Marmaduke from his saddle. Quick as thought Miles drew a small pocket-pistol from his bosom, and just as Viper was making a second rush towards him, he shot him dead. Burton groaned with terror. The horse made a mad effort to escape; then, finding the strong grasp on his rein, stood still, trembling with fear.

"Poor brute!" said Miles, putting back his pistol and looking at the dead dog; "but 'tis better so, he might have been made to do some bad deed some day, in bad hands. I thought he would be made your protector again, so I came prepared. Now we are two—man to man—hear me."

Burton could scarcely keep his seat from a coward fear, thus quite alone with the man he had so much injured.

"To-day," continued Miles, "you were in the old ruin by the river's side—you and her uncle: I saw you, but she did not—for this, I abridged her stay. I did not know your companion, till I watched you creep forth, like a base hound as you are, ever working in secret and darkness; and now, hear me—I love that girl—love her, as *I* love and hate, with all my soul, if all the powers of

earth stood between us, she shall be mine, or none other's. She does not yet know all my feeling towards herself. I would not expend all the force of that affection in one interview. I garner it up, like my hatred for you; and now I tell you, that unsleeping as my hatred is, so is my love undying, and I will accomplish both! What I have to say to you is, do not come between her and me; you will not prevent, but you may cause her pain; and every hair of her fair head is counted in my heart to hang loving thoughts upon, and woe betide if the weight of one of these be lost to her in peace, through you. Now I have said all I wished to say, you may go; but stay," he added, again grasping the loosening rein, "remember, not by counsellings of others, darken one moment of her life, neither watch, report, nor seek her; yours she never will be, and I am here to avenge any grief to her; I have more friends at Gatestone, perhaps, than you think—now, go; and if you advise, let it be wisely done!" He dropped the rein, and Marmaduke, who had vainly looked about, stealthily, hoping for some friendly face, some one to witness against Miles for violence, but all was silent, putting spurs to his horse, reached Gatestone. No wonder, then, he looked pale with his cousin's words ringing in his ears; especially those, "I have more friends at Gatestone, perhaps, than you think." He was in a mood to utter every syllable in fear and trembling before the person he had started from home with the intention of confounding—namely, poor little Minnie. As he seated himself, he caught Juvenal's eye, and made a sign which he intended for one imploring silence.

He was afraid of his shadow just then; but Juvenal was not one of very vivid intellect—he saw the sign—he had been awaiting the other's coming to speak. Thinking this the right moment, he commenced. Marmaduke coughed—all went as encouragement into Juvenal's ear; so, fixing his eyes on the thoughtful Minnie, he began in his peculiarly nasal twang to give utterance to a speech he had been conning over an hour before.

"We are all friends here, Marmaduke Burton. I look upon you *already* as almost one of the family; therefore I choose you to be witness of my just resentment, and firm resolution to have things amended. I see you approve me," he added, catching Burton's grimace, and mistaking its meaning. "You have blamed me, my friend, for supineness; you shall see how resolute I can be!"

All looked up in amazement; Sylvia fixed her eyes on Dora, who began, even she, to feel uncomfortable. Such prefaces are like bats flying round a room in some old house; every one fears them, not knowing on whom they may alight. Minnie was most unconcerned of all, until her uncle, pitching his voice in its most tenor and unpleasant key, exclaimed—"Minnie Dalzell, I am addressing myself to you. This day I, and my worthy friend Burton, were in the old ruin, when you, forgetting all maiden modesty, left your horse and old Thomas, the coachman, to sit upon a heap of ruins with——"

"For mercy's sake, uncle, not before him!" almost shrieked Minnie, springing up in terror of something, she scarcely knew what, and glancing at Burton.

"Brother, brother!" cried Dorcas, grasping his arm, herself pale with anguish for her beloved niece; she knew Minnie better than any one else did, and dreaded the conseqnences of this ill-advised exposure, which would only harden a resolute mind, where reasoning and love might have soothed, and turned away from its will.

"But I will speak, Dorcas!" cried he. "I am advised to do so, and publicly, to show her what people will think of her. Minnie, I say, was sitting alone on a heap of ruins with that scoundrel, Miles Tremenhere, this worthy man's base-born cousin."

"Not base-born, uncle," cried Minnie, starting up again; she had dropped on her chair. At these words she forgot all but Miles's sacred love for his mother, who, by this slander of him, was doubly calumniated. "Not base-born, uncle, though that man say it. His mother was as pure as my own, or she had never given birth to so worthy a son!" then a sense of her shame, before so many, coming over her, she sank on her chair, and, covering her face, sobbed aloud. Dorcas clasped her in her arms; Dora, too, though trembling, pressed her hands, as she drew them from the face, which turned in maiden shame into Dorcas's neck.

"Brother," cried Sylvia, with self-satisfied scorn, "you always are discovering some wonder. You are wrong—quite wrong—as usual. *If* Minnie were there, 'twas wrong; but others are more to blame than she, and, I make no doubt, *could* explain, *if they would*." She glanced angrily at Dora, who certainly was colouring, though without noticing Sylvia's personality. Lady

Ripley looked amazement on all. Juvenal was completely thrown out; he had made up a complete discourse, questions, answers, prayers, confessions, and final forgiveness—for he loved Minnie dearly, in his little way. Marmaduke almost would have preferred the lane and Miles's society, to this scene. There, he knew in his heart, he had no actual violence to fear, for every day was not one of retributive justice, as when his cousin avenged poor Mary Burns's case; but here he dreaded some unseen trap, to draw him into something which would bring Miles in revenge down upon him.

"I ask you, Burton," cried the perplexed Juvenal, at length, "whether we did not discover Minnie and your worthless cousin together? and whether you did not suggest our following her, on the assurance that they frequently met in secret? Come, speak out, Burton—they won't believe me," whined the wretched man. Dora raised her fine eyes, and fixed them intently upon the traitor. Lady Ripley rose. "Why—why," stammered Burton, "this is a most unpleasant affair—a family one—I have no right to be here. I would rather not reply," and he too rose.

"Stay!" cried Lady Dora, looking very pale, but with much dignity, placing herself in his way. "Mr. Burton has been chosen, or been selected, most unadvisedly by my uncle, to hear accusations against my dear cousin Minnie, who is, I am certain, innocent of all wrong. I am called upon to confess the truth, now—that *I* have sought, met, and walked, early in the morning with Mr. Tremenhere. My motive for so doing I will answer to

my mother, and I *know* him to be incapable of wrong towards Minnie!"

"But, pardon me, Lady Dora!" exclaimed the amazed Burton, gaining courage from surprise. "You were assuredly not the person who met Mr. Tremenhere to-day."

"She wasn't here—she wasn't here!" cried the perplexed and heated Juvenal, almost in a fit from anxiety. "She only returned home before dinner."

Minnie tried to speak. "Hush!" exclaimed Dora, taking her hand. "Do not compromise yourself for me. You met him on my business. *I* will explain that satisfactorily, when I am bound so to do."

"I knew it—I knew it!" cried the delighted Sylvia, rejoicing in her own perspicacity.

"She is taking my fault on herself," sobbed Minnie, with streaming eyes. I alone am to blame!"

"Can any one understand this, or them?" asked Juvenal, almost whining.

"Come, Lady Dora," said the mother, haughtily. "This requires explanation elsewhere," and she sailed away, followed by Dora, who stopped, however, first, and whispered softly to her cousin, as she embraced her. "Do not betray yourself. *I* have saved you this time—*save yourself* before it be too late." Poor Minnie was too weak with weeping to reply; she could only press her hand. Dorcas too arose, and, taking her niece fondly round the waist, led her away, and the door closed on Marmaduke, Sylvia, and Juvenal, and these three decided that it would be well if Lady Dora left. There

was a mystery no one could fathom. Sylvia then related Dora's morning walk, which certainly still further obscured the affair, and then she too left the room, to consult with Mrs. Gillett; and, when quite alone with Juvenal, no longer fearing traitors, Marmaduke related his meeting with his cousin—the threats—the acknowledgment of his love for Minnie, and thereupon these two worthies decided; one, that it would be best to prevent any more meetings by a little gentle coercion, and Juvenal at once resolved that she should be locked up!

CHAPTER XIII.

"HUSH!" said Dora, soothingly, some hours later, as she sat in Minnie's room beside her, holding a hand in her own. "All will be fair and bright soon, dear Minnie. Mr. Burton has been the mover in all this, to win you; I think that man loves you, in truth I do."

"And would *you* counsel me," cried the sobbing girl, "to marry so unworthy a creature?—this prying, mean, wicked man?"

Dora was silent a moment, in embarrassed thought; then she looked up and answered, though not at ease, evidently, "Why, he may seem many harsh things now; jealous of his cousin, he knows scarcely which way to act. I think you might be happy with him."

"With Marmaduke Burton!" she exclaimed, and her tears dried up in her starting eyes with wonder. "Marry him! I'd die sooner than even harbour the thought a moment! Oh, Dora! can *you* counsel me to so terrible a thing?"

"I do it, Minnie, to save you," her cousin replied, looking on the ground, and half-sighing as she spoke. "I dread your being led into some entanglement with—with—Mr. Tremenhere."

"And if I loved him, Dora, what then?"

"Oh, 'twould be a disgrace—an irretrievable, false step!" cried the other in agitation. "Think what he is! A man without name, position, character, perhaps—what do you know of him?"

"And what do you know *against* him, Dora?" asked Minnie, no longer sobbing, but in a low, firm voice.

"This—that, in my opinion, no honourable family should forget its dignity, and become allied to a blighted name, a name with the stain of——"

"Do not say that!" exclaimed her cousin, rising with energy, and pacing the room for an instant; then, as suddenly stopping before Dora, she continued, "Do not so harshly, and I am sure unjustly, judge a fellow-sister. 'Tis only in the hand of Time, the fate which may await ourselves; perhaps, calumnies we may suffer from—innocent now, innocent then, too. Dora, I love that man; I never knew how well, until I weighed it by my tears. I love him the deeper for every one I have shed this day for him!"

Dora was very pale, and did not reply.

Minnie continued: "Why do you hate him so much? Why did you seek him? Dora, dear Dora, tell me that!" She knelt before her cousin, on a stool at her feet, and, taking both hands, looked up in her face.

For some moments Dora was painfully silent. "No," she thought, "I will not tell her how weak I once was, in nearly loving him." This was the war within her. "I met him," she said at last, aloud, evading the first question, "because I feared you might love him. He

bore the character, in Florence, of a reckless man—such a man as you, my innocent cousin, should not marry; I sought and begged him to quit this place and you!"

"Oh!" cried Minnie, blushing at the picture before her mind's eye, "he must have fancied I had spoken of him with love, and we had scarcely met then, except as strangers. I hope he does not think this now. How could you have sought him for such a motive as that?—how touch on so delicate a subject?"

"I feared nothing," answered Dora haughtily; "my own dignity prevented a false construction being placed upon what I said or did. You are a child in the ways of the world, and, in your innocence, might compromise yourself, family, all, with this nameless man. I do not say any thing personally against him, but *our* name has ever been without stain; do not you, Minnie, by a base alliance, stamp it with a reproach."

"Dora," and the girl spoke low and impressively, "I may never, perhaps, meet Miles Tremenhere again; I feel certain, if I do, that only trouble will arise from it, for all seem against him, poor fellow; but this believe, that, if I truly know myself—if that man love me, unless I become his wife, I never will marry another; for he is so surrounded in my heart by every noble sentiment, from his wrongs, and the holy mission he has taken upon himself, that none other could hold the place in my esteem which he does. Do you know, Dora, I thought you loved him, and for that reason I dreaded my own heart's inclination towards him; now I am assured you do not, I seek no longer to check my affec-

tions; for though I may never be his wife, there can be no error in my love, for I never shall marry another."

Dora could not reply. The brow contracted—the cheek slightly flushed as in scorn—and then she grew pale and calm. "It is useless speaking to you," she said, after a thoughtful pause; "not now, at least—to-morrow we will resume our conversation. I will leave you now, Minnie; I do not wish my mother to know I have been here—she would question me, and I wish this conversation unknown to her." She rose hastily, as if some newly-formed plan impelled her to do so. "Good-night, dear cousin, and pray, think of all I have said; 'tis fondly meant."

"I know that well, Dora," answered Minnie, tenderly embracing her. Dora seemed impatient to leave. Taking her taper in her hand, she hurried down the passage, and rapped gently at Aunt Dorcas's room-door; first assuring herself that Minnie's was closed. She remained for some time with Aunt Dorcas, and, briefly relating her unsuccessful suit with her cousin, implored Dorcas to act for her. Surely some motive more than deep interest in Minnie guided her, though possibly unknown to herself; for this anxiety and fear for consequences were far beyond the usual forethought of a young girl. Such, generally, see all *couleur de rose* where two love, especially if young and handsome: futurity, interest, etc., they leave to older hearts, to cause heart-ache and care. The results were various next day, of all these plottings and consultations. The first was, Lady Ripley, to her daughter's surprise, sent her word early in

the morning, by her maid, to prepare for their departure for town. Truth to say, Lady Ripley was delighted to find a good excuse for leaving Gatestone, where she had promised to remain a month longer. She was anxious to return to town on Lord Randolph Gray's account, as we have seen; and she made poor Minnie's imprudence the excuse. In vain Lady Dora endeavoured to make her change her determination, urging the necessity of some one to watch over Minnie. She felt terrified, agitated, beyond expression, at the thought of leaving; but all her efforts to remain were fruitless. Lady Ripley *would* go; and she told Juvenal, that Minnie's misconduct obliged her to remove her innocent daughter from her influence, lest *her* name should become in any way compromised. This more than ever decided him on secluding Minnie in her room, to mark his disapprobation. And, as this conversation took place late the previous evening—in fact, while Dora was with Minnie—the latter was not a little overwhelmed with shame and indignation, when ordered next morning to "remain in her own room, until something should be decided about her." Sylvia was furious—all her jealousy of Lady Ripley broke forth in invectives against her intriguing daughter, as she termed Dora. Dora implored for Minnie; Dorcas argued the imprudence, not to say injustice, of so erroneous a step as thus degrading the girl in all eyes; it would make her lose all self-respect, and only engender recklessness. But Juvenal was like all fools—obstinate. Moreover, he was backed by Marmaduke Burton, himself too short-sighted to

foresee the consequences which might ensue. He hoped by hypocritically expressing his regret in some manner, by letter or personally, as Juvenal promised *he* should see her, to win at least a kind feeling through gratitude. Narrow-minded persons reckon only naturally, to the extent of their powers of reasoning. Minnie read him as she would an open page, and despised him tenfold more, if possible, for his narrow policy. Dora, in consternation and regret, took leave of the weeping Minnie. Alas! those tears would soon be dried by the wrong course pursued with her, and only give birth to silent resolution and suspicion of all, even for awhile of her dearly loved aunt, Dorcas. Dora was gone; Sylvia in earnest consultation with Mrs. Gillett, both agreeing that the master of the house, and Minnie's guardian, to do as he willed with her—was an idiot; for had not Lady Dora acknowledged that she alone was in fault; and had they not both witnessed the lovers meeting? Poor Minnie had been selected by them as a go-between. It was dreadful; but Mrs. Gillett, with her usual caution, said but half what she really thought, and in an after scene with Juvenal, though she pleaded for Minnie's liberty, at the same time so impressed him with the idea of her condemnation of all but himself—and this without any great deceit on her part, for the last speaker always had most reason in Mrs. Gillett's mind—that he fearlessly gave her free permission to visit Minnie, how and when she pleased; indeed, the key of the rooms (for there was a small music one where she was in the habit of practising, adjoining her bedroom) was in-

trusted to the housekeeper's safe keeping. "I tell you, Mrs. Gillett," he said, "it will do her good—one excellent lesson like this will save the girl—she has grown very headstrong of late."

Poor, blind Juvenal; his excellent lesson was as a stepping-stone to many sorrows—a finger-post down a long dark lane hedged with care, like thorns! Dorcas, as usual, did the most sensible thing of any of them. She walked over quietly, and in a spirit of conciliation, to Farmer Weld's, where Tremenhere was staying, and, requesting an interview, was shown into the room where he sat, but not alone—to her great surprise Mr. Skaife was his companion. Tremenhere rose in surprise, and some slight confusion. Had the farmer himself been there, the entrance might have been accomplished with more difficulty; as it was, only a servant was in the outer hall (a sort of large, homely, perfect old English farm kitchen) as she entered, and, innocent of wrong, shewed her in to where the two sat. After the momentary movement of embarrassment, Tremenhere offered her a chair, and in his own quiet gentlemanly manner, expressed his pleasure, whatever the cause, at her visit. He knew she was Minnie's almost mother, and he regarded her accordingly. Skaife rose, and coming forward said, "You are doubtless surprised to meet me here, and especially before visiting Gatestone. But I returned late last night, and this morning called to see Mr. Tremenhere—whom I may call my friend, I believe—in an affair interesting to both of us."

"Do you mean Miss Dalzell?" exclaimed Dorcas in astonishment.

"Oh, no!" answered Skaife, looking equally amazed at this abrupt question—being, as he was, totally ignorant of the recent events; "I allude to that poor girl, Mary Burns, whom I have placed in safety from further insult, at the request of Mr. Tremenhere, as business prevented his leaving this neighbourhood himself."

"It is kindly and rightly done by both," said Dorcas, scarcely knowing what she should next say—then added, without farther consideration of how far it might be prudent to inform Tremenhere of all—"But I may be pardoned for regretting that Mr. Tremenhere should not have been occupied elsewhere, as the events of the past few days threaten more painful results, I fear, than he anticipated when engaging in them."

"Good heavens! what do you mean, madam?" he asked, starting up aghast. Skaife sat like one petrified; something painful was paralyzing his faculties; he could not speak at first. Tremenhere glanced at him, after the first exclamation had escaped him. "I beg pardon," he said, in agitation. "I should, perhaps, be an importunate witness. I will go," and he prepared to do so.

"No, stay; pray, remain, Mr. Skaife," cried Dorcas. "I am glad you are here: you may perhaps exert your influence as a clergyman, as well as a friend, with Mr. Tremenhere."

Women who have never loved overlook and ignore many penalties attached to such chains round the heart; they are like a felon's irons, resounding with every step

we take, and galling somewhere, especially when but little hope is linked with them. Such was poor Skaife's case, and something now whispered him, that that *little* would soon be lost. Her next words confirmed this fear; for, neither of them answering her last speech, she continued hastily, as if resolved to utter all the worst at once, addressing herself to Miles—"You are perhaps not aware, Mr. Tremenhere, that your most imprudent—most unfortunate meetings of late, with Miss Dalzell, have been discovered, and reported to all, but first to her uncle and guardian—my brother."

"I am aware of that," he articulated through his set teeth.

Skaife felt cold at heart, and he felt, too, the blood deserting his cheek. For an instant a movement of indignation arose against Miles, as if he had deceived him; then the justice of the man triumphed, and bitter as his regret, his awakening regret, was—for he felt some painful revelation was about taking place—he exonerated the other from all wrong towards himself, ignorant as he was of his affection for Minnie, and, even if he had been acquainted with it, bound by no friendship or honour to him, to act otherwise than his inclinations dictated.

"All is known," continued Dorcas, in a sad tone; "and my heaviest grief is, that her uncle should have taken, I fear, so ill-advised a step as the one of coercion with Minnie."

"Coercion!" exclaimed both Miles and Skaife in a breath.

"Yes; he has determined upon keeping her confined

to her room, until you, Mr. Tremenhere, shall have quitted the neighbourhood, as the only means of separating you; but I fear he has done a rash thing with a girl of Minnie's high spirit."

Tremenhere rose hastily from his seat, and grasped the arm of his chair, as if to subdue his feelings; he only ejaculated "Oh!" but there were volumes of thought in that one word, and the resolute compression of his stern lip, as he half-smiled. Dorcas was looking thoughtfully on the ground. Skaife's eyes were fixed upon Tremenhere's face; he read his fate there, if her affection equalled his, in intensity and firmness. Tremenhere caught his eye, and, smiling in friendly confidence, as seeming to say, "You shall know all," dropped silently into his chair.

"I have come," said Dorcas, more composedly, "to ask, to implore you, Mr. Tremenhere, by the friendship which no unfortunate circumstance has banished from my thoughts—to leave this place, and forget any foolish words which may have passed between you and Minnie. Believe me, all pursuit will be vain—her uncle *never* will consent."

Skaife looked anxiously for the reply. Tremenhere rose impetuously:—"Madam," he cried, "in what light am I to regard this visit, with which you have honoured me?—as a friendly one, or as one dictated by Mr. Formby?"

"I come at my own heart's dictating," she answered meekly, "to one whom I liked, even though a wayward, impetuous boy—to one whom I sincerely pity; but

whom, nevertheless, I cannot countenance as a suitor to my niece."

"As all these I gladly welcome you, except when bearing the last prohibition," Tremenhere replied, as he took her hand gently, and pressed his lip upon it with deep respect. "And, as Miss Dalzell's much-loved aunt, I reverence you, dear madam; nevertheless, in all candour, I must not deceive you. If Miss Dalzell love me, as I now believe her to do, not all the uncles or guardians in the world, could keep her so carefully but that my love and perseverance should reach, to confirm her in her affection, by the assurance of mine, unalterably hers!"

"Unless I am in great error," said Skaife, after a moment's intense thought, "the acquaintance between yourself and Miss Dalzell is of very recent date?"

"It cannot be of many weeks," answered Dorcas, clinging to the hope that Skaife's words implied, of its being little matured.

"What signifies date in love?" cried Tremenhere. "The heart rejects all such. The brightest flowers are those blushing to light in half an hour's sunshine!"

"And they fade as soon!" ejaculated Dorcas. "Oh, pray, Mr. Tremenhere! relinquish this mad thought; or leave here for awhile: let time decide upon the durability of your affections."

"And leave her," he cried, with a scornful laugh, "to the tender mercies of a guardian, who, for so slight a seeming fault as half an hour passed in an old ruin, with one she knew from childhood, can dare to use violence towards her? Oh, no! Had you, dear madam, unad-

visedly done so, I would plead to your good sense and justice; but with men I war as a man should. What I may do, I know not; but whilst Miss Dalzell is confined on my account, and unjustly treated, I am bound by honour, as well as love, to stay and defend her."

"Then you knew one another long since?" said Skaife, sadly. With this admission from Miles, he saw every hope fade for himself.

"Oh, yes!" answered the other, and the voice grew gentle with the thought of that fair child; "when yet she was but a baby girl—a fair, flaxen-haired little thing; and, as we talked of those days together, year after year like melting icebergs faded away, and we stood side by side again in confidence and affection, with the sun shining upon us!"

Skaife and Dorcas both simultaneously looked at each other; and the looks said, "All is over—'tis vain wrestling with fate!"

"Besides," continued Miles, as if reading their thoughts, "there is a fate in all things. Our meeting has been one; it was so pre-ordained."

"Do not let that urge you," said Skaife, in forlorn hope of influencing him. "All things are not ordained at our birth; we may turn many evils aside, though placed in our path, by decision; they are as temptations and stumbling-blocks—rush on heedlessly, and they overthrow us—avoid them, they will not follow, but, like daunted cowards, shrink back! This temptation may be to lure you from a noble thought!"

"By heavens! you do well to remind me of that; I

had wellnigh overlooked it!" exclaimed Miles, standing up in all the majesty of his proud beauty. "This is a double incentive to win Miss Dalzell, to boldly stand on the ground her generosity has awarded me; in winning her, I shall struggle with redoubled energy to *prove* myself what I *know* I am! Thank you, Skaife—thank you; and you, dear madam, pray bear in mind, that whatever my acts may be, they shall be dictated in all true affection towards your niece, so that you, the generous, Christian woman towards myself, may approve me."

"'Tis vain urging you more, Mr. Tremenhere," she said, rising; "I can but now appeal to my niece's affection for me, and duty towards herself." She curtsied, and was turning away.

"Not thus," he cried, taking her hand. "Let the man be boy again, and take the hand in friendship once never refused him; think that all which may be done, will be done for Miss Dalzell's happiness. I do assure you I have never told her I loved her, nor has she confessed her's; but I am well-assured she has read mine, though *my* hope may be too presumptuous. Let this comfort you, dear madam—Miss Dalzell holds the decision in her hands, it is not in mine!"

A faint hope rushed to Dorcas's heart. Skaife had none. He looked upon Miles, and felt she *must* love so noble-minded a man, whose soul sat upon his brow, to record its worth in open day.

The men shook hands, Skaife promising to return soon; and, escorted by him, Dorcas quitted the farm-

house, leaving Tremenhere a prey to many wild thoughts and schemes.

This day, after a lengthened interview with Juvenal, to confirm him in his severity and watchfulness, Marmaduke Burton quitted the manor-house. Somehow he durst not remain after having told all to Juvenal. He remembered Miles's threats, and so he quitted for awhile, leaving Dalby to watch and report, as Juvenal also had promised to do; and, above all, keep the refractory Minnie under lock and key!

CHAPTER XIV.

We have said that Minnie was in a state of the greatest consternation when made acquainted with her uncle's stern resolution of coercion. At first she was too much pained to think—all power of reasoning had given way before the shock; she felt overwhelmed with shame, shame of herself—that much to be dreaded feeling in a young girl's heart. In Minnie's, after the power of memory returned, it created a sense of deep degradation, followed by recklessness—two dangerous things with which to start in that new phase in existence—love; for the latter would make her care little for consequences, the former bid her oppressed heart cling with double affection to the bosom where her head might lie in peace, love, and a true appreciation of her worth, and indignation for her wrongs. She sat and reviewed all her conduct, and then her swelling heart revolted against her uncle's injustice; for, in point of fact, she had but *once* met Tremenhere by consent, on the fatal day in which they were discovered. We have seen their first acquaintance through Mr. Skaife; then in Mrs. Gillett's room; subsequently, Miles had watched for her, 'tis true: but she was innocent of all, except

concealing these meetings—and to whom confide them, knowing well how unpopular he was? Once or twice he had met her even in her uncle's grounds, as she sat sketching; he took pleasure in directing her pencil. Then, when he proposed to sketch her favourite old ruin for her, if she would come, what harm could she see in the request? It was a fact, he ever seemed more, to her mind's eye, as a dear brother, friend, playfellow of childhood, than a man to be shunned for love's sake. Without a dream of harm, she went there; and it was that day, for the first time, that her heart awoke to its real state, and her own danger. We have seen how she flew, in confidence and love, to repose all in the bosom of her beloved aunt. We say all this, because we would plead Minnie's case with prudes and worldly-wise folks, who might shake their heads in grave reprehension, or accuse her of more error than, in honest truth, she was guilty of. All these scenes she reviewed in her quiet chamber; and then, the deep sense of wrong and degradation overwhelming her, she dropped on her knees, and, compressing her throbbing temples with her hands, wept long and bitterly. She was as a statue mourning over itself, as the base of its pedestal from which it had been rudely hurled in scorn and derision by some senseless mob. In this mood Dorcas visited her, and endeavoured to soothe, though even she blamed, her. Then Sylvia came, and inveighed against her brother's mad blindness; for, "Had not Dora confessed?—to be sure she had. Minnie was too good a girl to deceive any one, or compromise herself by meeting this Tremen-

here!" Whereupon, Minnie, taking Dora's part, declared that she alone was to blame for all. Sylvia's anger arose at this "mock sentimentality," as she termed it. "It is positively absurd," she cried, "endeavouring to screen Dora! All, but my foolish brother, know that you are quite innocent in this affair. A pretty thing, indeed, to accuse yourself of so disgraceful, unpardonable, indelicate an act, as privately meeting any man!"

This certainly did not soothe her; but the crowning of all was when Juvenal entered, and, reproaching her as a disgrace to them all, declared she should not quit her room until she consented to marry Marmaduke! Oh! then Minnie's spirit rebelled; she paced the room when he was gone, and nothing scarcely could have been desperate enough to satisfy her exasperation at that moment, by way of revenge! Poor girl, revenge, like curses, sends its chickens home to roost! Thus passed the first day, and the second something like it, and then evening came. Juvenal, like other little bodies, was a great man in a brief temporary power; he was master of Gatestone, and resolved to show all that he was so. All this was Burton's counselling; consequently, when the second day came, and Minnie still was obdurate, and firmly refused even to see Marmaduke Burton, should he come, her uncle resolved to tighten her chains, and so he forbade even Dorcas or Sylvia to see her, only Dame Gillett and himself! Even the squire had confidence in the housekeeper, he had made her frequent presents, for which she had been very grateful; more-

over, he knew she had favoured his suit with Minnie; he and Juvenal—indeed all were more or less ignorant of her great error about Miles's affections being placed on Lady Dora—and none knew that she had not quite cast from her regards the "comely boy" Tremenhere. She certainly urged *for* Marmaduke, when she went to Minnie's room, and as certainly did she ignorantly add fresh fuel to feed her love for his cousin, by beguiling the time to the prisoner, relating how Master Miles had come last night again to her room, frightening her out of her wits for fear he should be seen, and how he was nearly mad himself to see Minnie—poor young man! "just to speak, of course, of Lady Dora; and she didn't think that lady had behaved well to him, and she pitied him from the *very* bottom of her heart," &c. &c. &c. Minnie was learning worldly caution; she saw Mrs. Gillett's error. All her protestations to her aunt Sylvia had been disregarded, in clearing her cousin of any imprudence, and Mrs. Gillett was Sylvia's echo in all. She at first, from sheer disheartenment, left this latter in her error, and then permitted her to remain in it, as she seemed resolved to do so. This, too, Tremenhere was doing, but with more active motives. Braving all risk the previous evening to see Mrs. Gillett, and speaking of his love, incline this woman to assist them to a meeting, provided Minnie would consent, he found, after five minutes' conversation, on what an erroneous path the housekeeper was walking, so he paused in his revelation of love. Might not this serve him better than confiding the truth? Men are generally less scrupulous

than women in telling stories. Some rejoice in them; for nothing would Minnie utter one wilfully—she abhorred them as mean, and devil's snares too, EVER leading somehow to sorrow; but Tremenhere only thought of how to accomplish a meeting with her. Mrs. Gillett's mistake might render it practicable; so he not only permitted her to think him in love, and beloved by Dora, but favoured the deception of judgment in every way! "Time will prove the real facts," he said to himself. "It cannot injure Lady Dora; Mrs. Gillett I *know* to be one to confide in fearlessly, so let it pass!—'tis a straw of hope."

We are not, reader, painting a *rara avis* in Tremenhere; but a noble-hearted, generous man—headstrong, full of wild passions—but honourable in every dictate of his soul. Still, a mere mortal man, driven to desperation by various causes; and resolved, however it might be done, to *see* Minnie, and know his fate from her own lips. If she loved him—then all would be clear before him. Mrs. Gillett, however, was too much alarmed then, to second any interview, but she gave him leave to come again in the dusk; no one was near, and she pitied the poor fellow! What *real* woman is deaf to a tale of love and locksmiths? if she can give nothing more, she awards her sincere sympathy. Mr. Tremenhere left, and stealthily crept through the garden and shrubbery, gaining the fields beyond unperceived. Next evening he again sallied forth towards his confidant's. It must not be supposed that Mrs. Gillett felt annoyed at being thus sought—far from it; it increased her con-

sequence, giving her *power*, which no one totally despises. She felt sometimes as much embarrassed with all these various plots and plans in hand, as a charioteer in a ring, driving a dozen wild horses at once. The only thing to prevent concussion, was the keeping them well in hand, with perfect self-possession; and these things she always kept in view. Besides, she was not wronging her master's confidence in her: he was in error, and she felt she should rather be obliging him, by removing all fear about Miss Minnie, by favouring the loves of this man and Lady Dora. On this evening, Tremenhere, at ten o'clock, was to bring her a letter for Minnie, which she faithfully promised and purposed giving to her; all relating to lady Dora, of course, understood. At a quarter to ten, Miles stole through the shrubbery gate, of which she had given him a key. It was a lovely starlight night in June—no moon to betray his wandering—just light enough to lead him onward in safety. He closed the gate, and stood for a moment looking around—then a lover's thought—a perfect lover's one, arose in his mind, to go and look at Minnie's window. We always like to know the aspect of such things, in such cases. He had learned from Minnie herself, which were her's. In a few moments he stood before them, on the soft turf, looking upwards. There was a light within, but the window was open—'twas a lattice; for Gatestone was not a modern built structure, but a good old family seat, like so many we meet with in the north of England, especially in Yorkshire. It was the sort of lattice window from which one could have fancied a

dame in the olden time, waving a snowy scarf to a departing warrior! Before this comfortable-looking, homely window, hung a curtain. This side of the house was facing the south, and a wide-spreading vine mingled with the ivy on the wall, creeping around it. There are many cruel temptations in life, thrown in our path. Now Tremenhere had merely, lover-like, stolen round to look upon his "ladye's" window; but whilst gazing upwards at it, something against the wall attracted his attention. He drew nearer, cautiously. This temptation was a ladder, which John Gardener had left, after nailing the vines. In an instant, a thought—a desire, crept into Miles's heart; this was naturally, to make use of this ladder! It was an impulse—an irresistible one. Cautiously he moved it nearer Minnie's window, and crept half-way upwards. A voice struck on his ear!—then another!—the first was Juvenal's, the last Minnie's. This latter seemed scarcely able to articulate distinctly from emotion. Some would have mounted higher, and listened. Miles's conscience forbade this. Though tricking's all fair in love, he felt it would not be strictly honourable; so down he crept again. The man's voice rose—the woman's seemed scarcely a breath—then a door closed violently, and all was for a moment still within that chamber, or rather, the little music-room; for this it was. Then the voice rose higher, and the girl was sobbing in her solitude and affliction. Juvenal closed the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket, sagely shaking his head as he did so. "She shall never quit that room till she consents to marry Burton!" he

soliloquized, as he dropped step by step ploddingly down stairs, nodding as he did so. "Burton was quite right," he continued; "I have been too lenient—I'll be master now—it is just a little obstinacy; of course, I must know better than she can what's for her ultimate benefit. Her spirit will soon give in, and, as Burton says," (Juvenal was like the assinine tribe, he wouldn't move without a goad—Burton was his,) "she'll soon surrender; and as for that Tremenhere, why he will tire in a short time, when he finds it impossible to see her, and leave the neighbourhood. This good key in my pocket," here he smiled and nodded in perfect contentment and peace, "I defy him!" As *he* uttered these last words, Tremenhere, regardless of every thing but poor sobbing Minnie, pushed aside the curtain, and darkened the casement before stepping in. She uttered a faint scream of terror.

"There you may scream!" cried Juvenal, who heard her; "but I shall not let you out. Was there ever so obstinate a girl? Could any one have believed it?"

"Minnie, dear Minnie!" whispered Tremenhere, stepping in. "For Heaven's sake, hush! 'tis I, Miles," and he clasped the hand of the terrified girl.

"Go—go!" she cried, releasing her hand, and retreating in breathless alarm, she scarcely knew why. "Go! this is madness; it will ruin me should they discover you. Oh! Mr. Tremenhere, pray, pray, leave me!"

"Mr. Tremenhere!" he said sadly. "Is it indeed only this? Oh! then I have done wrong in coming,

and doubly wrong in causing you so much suffering, which I am powerless to alleviate by my devotedness!"

"You wrong me—you do wrong me, *Miles!*" she exclaimed, much agitated; "but I am so overwhelmed with my uncle's cruelty, I scarcely know what I say."

As the word "Miles" fell from her lips, he was at her side, her hands in both of his again, and his deep, loving eyes bent down upon the trembling girl. "Do not speak again, if it should be to unsay that kind word, Minnie," he whispered; "but let me look at you silent, and watch the emotion on your face, whilst I tell you all I now can say. *That* emotion will be my best answer. Minnie dear—*dearest*, I love you. I would not say these words when last we met; I feared lest I had mistaken a wilder, more evanescent feeling for this all-absorbing one; but our separation has proved me. I know myself. Had passion alone guided me, I should not be here; *that*, with me, is fleeting as a star seeking the sea; but my love—oh! this is as the sea itself. It may seem for a while to roll outwards—lost in the world, as wave in wave; but it will flow back to break upon its own shores, and go wherever I may, my love will ever return to cast itself at your feet."

"And what can this love avail us, Miles?" she whispered timidly, fearful of saying too much. "We must part soon, and how may we ever hope to meet, with so many to oppose us?"

"Does this daunt you already?" he asked, smiling. "If you love me, I fear nothing; this assurance is all I ask. Think well, dear girl, before you reply; for I do

not seek a mere confession of your heart's prompting affections *now*. I ask you to ponder well, and say whether you are sure, Minnie, that above every man you ever may see, you can love me? whether, for my sake, you are willing, under all circumstances, to share my fate?"

"I have asked myself this, Miles," she said seriously, "before to-night; I need not pause to weigh my own affections; I never shall love any man as I love you."

"Minnie," he whispered, for he trembled with emotion as he drew her gently towards his supporting arm, "do not mistake your feelings, it would be destruction to me; for my every thought is united to you. Do not wreck them, as so many others have been wrecked in my sad fate. I am wrong," he added, more joyously. "If you love me truly, when our lives shall be one, O then, in that happiness I shall become another man, and doubly energetic in my appointed task, for your dear sake, to raise you where you should and shall be!"

"I don't know how it is, Miles," she said seriously, for it seemed as if the child had all departed, leaving a grave, thoughtful woman; "but I never thought of love, as they say most young girls do; it was rather distasteful to me, I heard so much about marriage until we met; and now, my love for you has so much of reverence with it, I *know* I never could feel for another as I do for you."

"Darling," he whispered, smiling, "I don't half like that word 'reverence'—you must not feel too much of that, or I shall dread the disparity of our years as engendering fear, more than love: love, dear child,

should be all-confiding, all-fearless, childish, and innocent."

"I do not fear you, Miles, believe me; but I love. I look upon you with so many combined feelings, as brother, father—*all* those affections which I have never known, they seem to gather round you: how, then, can I do otherwise than reverence you?"

He was silent some moments; then, removing the arm which had clasped her waist, he took her hand in both of his, and said seriously—"My ideas, dearest, of what a wife should be, are perhaps more rigid than those of the many, and how that wife should be won. There was a time, long ago, I might perhaps, in the impetuosity of youth and prosperity, have urged you to fly with me. *Now*, I would not do so; for, Minnie, though love *at first* may excuse all, there might come a time when the husband would reflect. I am a very jealous man; do not let this alarm you. You never would arouse it by act of yours, I feel assured; still, we are mortal. Some day I might remember how I had won you, if you outstepped the bounds of strict prudence, and this might raise the demon Suspicion in my mind. You see how candid I am!"

"I love you for it the better, Miles. Our love is not an ordinary one. In wedding you, I espouse your sacred duty, to work hand in hand with you, and urge you on, should a momentary lethargy overtake you. Such an engagement should not be lightly accepted; for, in marrying you, I marry a man of care, and heavy obligation."

"Dearest Minnie, now I have no further fear; so let us speak of our plans. I came to-night—'twas an impulse done without consideration, or I should not have been here — for your fame's sake, lest a discovery might be made. I will not come again; you must meet me elsewhere."

"How, Miles?" she asked, smiling in his face; "you forget I am a prisoner!"

"I think I can arrange it, with the connivance of Dame Gillett. She——" He had commenced this speech smiling; something, however, crossed his mind. So pure was Minnie in his thought, so pure would he keep her, that the idea of making her a party to his own little *ruse* with the housekeeper, pained him. No; he preferred the risk of that woman discovering the truth, rather than make Minnie do one thing, not clear as noonday, *even had she consented,* which probably she would not. "She," he said, correcting his first thought "likes me; I saw her last evening; she permits me again to play the boy, and creep through that pretty window, by which Minnie, too, has learned the way; I will induce her to smuggle you down there."

"Will she, do you think?" she asked joyously.

"I hope so, and now for another point, my darling girl. My wife must be boldly—manfully sought; secure of your love, I will ask your hand from your uncle."

"My uncle!" she exclaimed in terror. "He never will consent; he will be doubly severe with me, urged on, I know, by Marmaduke Burton."

"Confide in me, Minnie; this must be done. Let them

not say of me, that I came only in secret, afraid of the light. I have formed no plans; only this first necessary act must be put in practice: let time decide the rest. It was the assurance of your more than passing love, that I required, before appealing to your relations. I do not doubt you now, so my path is clear before me!"

For some time longer he argued with her, before, in her terror, she could see the necessity of this active measure; but when he showed her how soon he should be obliged, by engagements elsewhere, to quit this neighbourhood, and leave her, these circumstances, coupled with the absence of Marmaduke Burton, induced her to give a trembling consent, on condition that nothing should be hinted about their having met since her incarceration. Time, which always flies when we are happy, warned them to separate, and yet, with all his stoicism, when he turned towards the window, his courage to leave her failed him. "I am weaker than I thought, Minnie," he whispered, clasping her to his bosom, and kissing the fair open brow, which blushed beneath his embrace; "for I know not how to leave you in the great uncertainty of our meeting again soon. What if I lost you!" and, at the thought, his strong frame trembled. "I feel *that* would make me more than a desperate man—a perfectly reckless one! Child, how is it you have made me love you so well? how have you brought life where every feeling seemed dead? Remember, Minnie, when they urge, or, possibly, endeavour to coerce your will—remember what you hold in your keeping, and be firm!"

Minnie, in woman's weakness, wept, where he prayed. Weeping and prayers are bad sponsors for an affection—they baptize it in sorrow! One more embrace, and yet his dark eyes, clouding in trouble, could scarcely withdraw from her uplifted face; he turned again and again, and when his hand quitted hers, and his foot descended the ladder, he felt a desolation *never* felt before, not even when name and home were lost to him!

While Miles was thus pursuing the love which had sprung up in his heart, amid so many weeds, one sweet choice flower, scattered there by accident; his cousin Marmaduke was staying in Lancashire with an old maiden aunt. All, that such are represented, when sketched by an unloving pencil, and there he received daily reports from Juvenal, of the progress of his suit by proxy with Minnie. We have said fear made him quit the manor-house. People, when they scheme, trace out a suppositious line over which all their personages pass in succession; and they are sadly perplexed, when, by some most unforeseen circumstance, they step out of the road. 'Tis like a railway carriage running off the line; it frequently upsets all the others. It had never entered into the calculation of either Marmaduke or Juvenal, that Miles could in any manner hold converse or communication with Minnie, still less, have the audacity *openly* to seek her. Great then was the consternation of both—for one knew it nearly as soon as the other—when a letter arrived for Juvenal, written in manliness and dignity, before which, both, though unacknowledged, bowed in respect; stating, that well

assured nothing could change either his love for Minnie, or her's for himself, he wrote, imploring Juvenal to consent to their union. He (Miles) had assured himself of her unalterable affection, the stronger for the coercion to which they endeavoured to subject it; and he could but implore her uncle and guardian, to consider how far he was acting in love towards her, to oppose this; that assured as he was of his own legitimacy, he only wanted time to prove it, until when he felt convinced Minnie would be happier as an artist's wife; for such was the profession he had made choice of, than as mistress of thousands, if they were separated. He then apologized for a seeming vanity in speaking thus positively; but he only quoted the words of lips incapable of speaking untruthfully—hers. He had not wealth to offer; but an unblemished name—*and this he would prove*—love unbounded, and the best wealth in the world—that earned by those talents which are spirits' gifts, etc., etc. We said, great was the consternation this letter aroused. Every line was an enigma. How had they met? How communicated with one another? Evidently they had done so, recently. Juvenal rushed off with the letter to Minnie's room. She grew very pale—then she thought of Miles, and her heart strengthened itself—it leaned on his love, and grew strong and fearless. Unhesitatingly she confirmed all the letter said, adding more, "That she never would marry another. She could not in honour; for all her affections were his." But she obstinately refused to hint even how they had communicated with one another. And Juvenal could

only rail, and declare, that "Now she *should* marry Burton, and that right soon." Thus saying, he double-locked the door, and hurried off to Mrs. Gillett. Even with this evidence she would not believe that Minnie was the *real* object—'twas some trick! And she shook her head, as if she knew a great deal more than she gave utterance to. All this drove Juvenal nearly mad; like all persons of little mind, he was extremely curious; and this feeling predominated over even his annoyance at her firm refusal to marry Burton. He could not imagine how they had met. A ladder was the last means of communication he should have dreamed of. From Mrs. Gillett he flew to Sylvia, who joined in one common cause with him in perplexing her brains. Between them, they settled the blame somehow on Dorcas; for neither loved her—she was too unlike them. Sylvia blessed her own prudence, which had never inclined her to the love of any man! How easily we can abuse the thing which has never been offered to our acceptance! And here Juvenal committed the two most grievous errors he had yet been guilty of, in Minnie's case; he allowed Sylvia to visit her, who, by her harshness and reviling of Miles, Dorcas, and all whom the other loved or liked, only strengthened her love and resolution. Dorcas, who might have led her, was forbidden to have access; for Juvenal could be a tyrant when he pleased. The other error he committed, was by Burton's advice, leaving Tremenhere's letter unanswered—a contemptuous silence, which would raise a storm over his own head. This evening Tremenhere did not wander under Minnie's

window, but went straight towards Mrs. Gillett's room, and in the beaten path, which lay in an unbroken line before his mind's eye, without hesitation he confessed to her, that her own error had induced his acquiescence about Lady Dora, that now, by no crooked ways, would he win his wife—for wife she should be; and he begged her to think of her young days, and of those when he was a favoured guest at Gatestone, now, driven hence for no fault of his own; and, in consideration of all these things, to procure him an interview with Minnie. She could easily arrange it, by bringing her to her room when all were at rest—for, by eleven o'clock, Gatestone was generally in profound repose—quiet, at all events. Mrs. Gillett was aghast at this confession. At first anger moved her; then her woman's kinder nature arose triumphant, and she consented for once—only once, to "do her best"—which meant, complete success, for she had the entire confidence of Juvenal, and keys of the prisoner's room. Mrs. Gillett was but a mere woman, though the oracle of so many; and, as she looked upon the tall handsome man pleading so earnestly before her, she could not resist him. She was not a woman to be bribed by money; power and flattering of her talents did much, however! It had been a day of great excitement to all; for Dorcas had sought Skaife, in his double capacity as friend and curate of the parish, and implored him to speak to and reason with her brother—*she* feared *all* from his ill-advised conduct towards his niece. Skaife was manliness itself; he felt much the loss of Minnie. Nevertheless,

he never had permitted hope to lead him much astray as regarded her affection for himself. Miles he liked—their hearts kindled towards one another; and now, with every wish to serve him, even at his own expense, he sought Juvenal. In vain, however, he urged the injustice of condemning Tremenhere even if the law had rejected him as heir to the manor-house, it was his parent's error, if really he were illegitimate.

"If," said Juvenal, in his shrillest tenor; "I tell you he is, and a scamp into the bargain!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Formby," said the other, mildly, "if I ask your authority? I have made diligent inquiry before undertaking this mediation between you; which, let me add, is not from any solicitation of his. I say, I have made diligent inquiry; and Mr. Tremenhere, as son and master, bore the highest character in the neighbourhood, and is now spoken of by many with tears of regret."

"If he were a respectable man," said the irate Juvenal, "why did he go so often from home, and live many months together abroad?"

"By his parents' wish, and with their full consent. He is an artist of great and rising fame; his studio, until destroyed at the manor-house, attested that, I understand."

"This proves what I say!" cried the *liberal*-minded Juvenal; "no gentleman would have turned painter; and it also proves he knew of his illegitimacy, and was providing against his fall from a false position."

Skaife bit his lip to keep down the angry reply. He came to conciliate. He said at last,—

"I cannot agree with you, Mr. Formby, but will not reply. I come now on a mission of peace, and for, I conscientiously believe, the benefit of all. Mr. Tremenhere is attached to Miss Dalzell—his affection is quite returned," (his voice trembled as he said this;) "it is for you to consider, as one loving her so well, how far you are acting kindly in blighting those affections. I should not think Miss Dalzell one to love lightly or unworthily. Think, too, to what extremities you may drive them?"

"I defy them—I defy them!" squealed the other; "I have her in safety—she shall marry Marmaduke Burton; and in proof, I purpose sending her to his aunt's care in Lancashire, where he is now staying."

Juvenal unwittingly let this escape him. Skaife started in amazement and agitation.

"Surely!" he cried, unable to control his emotion, "you do not seriously intend doing this? Pause awhile, and reflect, Mr. Formby, on your niece's sufferings so undeserved; for she was, at most, guilty only of a little pardonable imprudence. Mr. Tremenhere had known her as a child."

"I thought," replied Juvenal coarsely, "that *you* had been a suitor yourself? All this seems very strange to me, and not at all clear. What do you hope for by giving her to another?" and he glanced suspiciously at him.

Skaife coloured deeply; and, taking his hat from the

table, said with dignity, "I hope, Mr. Formby, for the approval of my own heart, in a cause which I, as a clergyman, condemn, one of unjust oppression—pardon me this intrusion!" He bowed quietly and quitted the room, leaving Juvenal abashed, angry, and more resolved, from sheer annoyance and petty spite, than ever. Skaife quitted in deep thought. He deemed it better not to inform Tremenhere of what had escaped Juvenal —namely, his intention of sending Minnie to Lancashire. It might not be true; it would perhaps urge him to some act of desperation. Even Skaife was ignorant of how the delinquents had met, which naturally made him more cautious, suspecting, and truly, that Tremenhere's honour was a safer barrier against his elopement with Minnie, than all her uncle's locks and keys. On the evening of these events, Miles, as we have said, sought Mrs. Gillett, whom, strange to say, no one suspected of being an accessory, favourable to Tremenhere and Minnie. The clock struck eleven, as the latter on tiptoe crept down the long passage after the trembling Mrs. Gillett, who was completely bewildered between the enormity of the deed she was committing, its responsibility, and her fear of being caught. However, they reached her room in safety, and not even her presence prevented Miles from clasping Minnie in his arms, as he called her by his favourite appellation, "My darling child!"

"Ay—child, child!" muttered Mrs. Gillett, shaking her head. "It's all very well, calling her that; but if

you only loved her as one, we shouldn't be all of us in a peck of trouble!"

"Forgive me, dear Mrs. Gillett," said Minnie, holding out one hand to her, the other was clasped in Miles's, who looked down, all love and devotion, on her lovely, smiling face, which, child-like, was lit up with the present joy, forgetful of past or future care.

"Mrs. Gillett," he said, "you will be the first to laugh and rejoice, when you come with us to the Old Place yonder"—thus he always spoke of the manor-house; "for I tell you again, *we shall return there in gladness!*"

"Ah! well may it be so, Master Miles; but I cannot just see how that is to take place. He as is there, won't be so soon got out, and I shouldn't speak against him neither; he's been civil enough to me, and master wishes it; but there, Miss, don't; and there's been so much said one way and the t'other lately, that I'm conglomerated, and don't know what to say."

"Gillett, you're a good soul!" exclaimed the happy Miles.

"It's very well calling me so, but I don't know that I'm doing quite right; but there, Master Miles, I cannot forget when you were a boy, and used to come in at the window and steal my preserves, and laugh in my face when you'd done so; and I don't think you're as bad as they say; and though I do let you see her—poor, dear child!—don't go and steal her as you did my—— Lauks-a-marcy! what's that?" she cried alarmed, changing her tone. The others started up in alarm. "Marciful luck! if it a'n't master's voice and step

a-comin' here!" and she flitted about, wringing her hands in terror. There was a sofa in the room, and a large housekeeper's cupboard; this was whence Miles had often pilfered in olden times—well he knew it; it was the act of a moment, to draw Minnie in, and close the door. Mrs. Gillett dropped, more dead than alive, on the sofa as the door opened, and Juvenal cautiously peeped in, in his dressing-gown, and, with only his head to be seen, scanned every corner of the room.

"Hist, Gillett," he whispered, as the terrified woman stared at him, "it's only I. I've heard the strangest noises in the house—come, and search with me;" and he walked cautiously in. "I always take a strong cup of green tea the last thing going to bed," he whispered; "Mr. Burton said it was a good thing to make one wakeful, and so I find it; one cannot be too much so while that horrid man's in the neighbourhood. (Minnie clasped Miles's hand.) But there's one blessing—my niece won't be here much longer; I'll take her to Lancashire, to Miss Burton's, next week; I've decided upon that! How scared you look, Mrs. Gillett! Have you been disturbed, too? Good, faithful creature, that's why you are up so late! Come, and help me search!"

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Gillett was destined to be placed in embarrassing circumstances in her own room, as on a former occasion, so she was now afraid to move; the window was open —what if she went out with Juvenal, and Minnie should run away! Her blood ran cold at the thought. No, stay she must, and risk any thing her master might say. She looked up, the key was in the cupboard where the two were hidden—should Juvenal go there! Her agony shewed itself on her countenance, which the other at last noticed. "I have alarmed you," he said; "come, compose yourself; there is nothing wrong, I trust; only I assuredly heard footsteps passing by my door, then noises in the house."

"Lauk, Sir!" exclaimed the woman, though still trembling; "it was that green tea—it always gives one strange fancies."

"Well, maybe so, Gillett, but it will do no harm to search; but first let us shut down this window—it is not prudent to have it open so late, and that man in the neighbourhood."

"Marcy upon us!" she cried, impatiently, "one would really think, from all the fuss made, that Mr. Tre-

menhere was an evil spirit, master, and not a young man we all liked once."

Juvenal stopped suddenly, and stared at her; then, turning round, walked silently to the window and fastened it. His hand was stretched towards the cupboard door, when a sharp clanging sound on the floor startled him—he was any thing but brave; and the hour, the half-lighted room, and assuredly not least, the cup of green tea, made him nervous. He sprang round, "What was that?" he cried.

"I heard nothing," she responded sulkily; now her first alarm had a little subsided, a sort of dogged restlessness succeeded. Juvenal looked on the floor, but so superficially that he did not notice a key which had fallen from his pocket. "Come along!" he said, forgetting the cupboard, "let us search the house—stop," he cried, putting his hand in his pocket; "what have I done with the key of Miss Minnie's room? Oh! here it is," and he took one from the table. "I just peeped in as I came down—all was quite silent and secure there."

"That's my key, master!" exclaimed Mrs. Gillett.

"I beg your pardon, Gillett, I put it out of my hand when I came in," and he pocketed it; and, a little better than the last one, which had hung in the orifice, and thus fell out—Mrs. Gillett felt more reconciled now the window was fastened; so leaving her light, and following Juvenal, she quitted the room, locking the door carefully after her, and withdrawing the key. As she did so, the cupboard door opened, and Miles and his terrified companion stepped out.

"Minnie," he said "reckon to me to-night all the degradation I have felt; obliged to hide, for your sake, and that good woman's, like a thief. I am indeed thankful to Heaven that he did not find me—it would have crushed my heart."

"I will weigh it against my affection, dear Miles," she said, "and you will forget it."

"What could he mean," he asked, suddenly, "by speaking of your journey to Lancashire? Surely no such project is in view?"

"I have not heard of it, Miles; it must be one of my uncle's sudden fancies. He is always starting some unformed idea—oh! that could never be intended!" and involuntarily she clung to him with dread.

"May his good angel keep him from such thoughts, Minnie, dearest; for if he should seriously intend, then I will answer for no good resolution of mine resisting against so much wrong."

"What do you mean, Miles? Don't look so stern—you terrify me."

"Poor child!" he said tenderly, drawing her to a seat. "how you tremble. In truth, Minnie, our love has been set in sorrow—grown in care; well, it will be the stronger for it. Flowers are soon uprooted, weeds tenacious, and difficult to tear from the earth. Minnie, have you thought what we should do, if all gentle measures failed?"

"I have not dared to do so," she whispered.

"Neither have I until the last half-hour. Those words of your uncle distract my mind, and excite

thoughts. What, Minnie, if they should thus seek to part us—what if force and tyranny be used? There would not always be a Mrs. Gillett, perhaps, to help us —what should we do?"

"Do not let us think of it, dear Miles, they never —my uncle would never act so towards me."

"Not of himself, perhaps; but he is in the hands of as dark-hearted a man as ever lived, Marmaduke Burton. Promise me one thing to-night, dear child—swear to me, that no power shall ever make you marry another."

"Miles, it needs no oath; even the thought is as little tangible as falling snow, which melts in the outstretched hand. I cannot even imagine the possibility of losing you."

"Thanks, darling—thanks, dear Minnie, for that assurance. Now will I wait patiently; work heart and soul to win the favour of your friends; defy fate and my worthless enemy; and, above all, be patient, and wait."

How often do we make excellent resolutions, which we think nothing can overthrow, and some mocking devil has already crumbled the rock on which we built them, to sand! A step was heard in the passage; they rose hastily, when Mrs. Gillett coughed, in signal of safety, as she turned the key outside. As Miles arose, his foot struck against something on the floor; he stooped, 'twas a key. A sudden thought, an impulse, urged him to conceal it, unseen even by Minnie. At that moment the housekeeper entered alone, and closing the door cautiously, locked it.

"Now," she cried, as she did so, "never again—no,

never, will I have any thing to do with this affair; there's twice I have been nearly caught. No, never again!" and she dropped, really exhausted from emotion, into a chair.

"My dear Gillett," coaxed Minnie, putting a hand on her shoulder, "don't be angry; was it our fault that uncle came down? What shall we do without you?"

"You do not mean it—do you, Mrs. Gillett?" asked Miles, drawing a chair near her, and trying to catch the hand she drew pettishly away.

"Yes, but I do, though," she crossly answered; "and as for you, I really don't think you have behaved so well to me; you deceived me about Lady Dora, you——"

"You deceived yourself, dear Mrs. Gillett. Come, be just."

"Well, you didn't contradict me? No; I've been deceived, and nobody cares for me. Who would have thought of master coming sneaking down at this hour? drat his green tea!" and, as she spoke, she rose and began searching every where, in her pockets, and on the table, chairs, sofa—every place. Poor Minnie, half in despair, whispered Miles—"Don't say any more to-night; she is cross: I know her humour. Leave her to herself; it will be all right to-morrow."

"What are you whispering about, Miss Minnie?" cried the crabbed woman, turning towards where they stood, his hand clasping both hers. "Ugh!" she continued, twisting away again, "it's all very pleasant, love-making, I daresay. You don't care for me, or any thing else. I want to know where's the key?"

"What key?" asked the really innocent Minnie.

"What key? why, the one of your door, to be sure. Musn't I lock you up? and how are you to get in without the key?"

Miles bit his lip to conceal a smile; he was quite resolved, unless in a case of absolute necessity, to keep it—why? he had not asked himself. Neither he nor Minnie felt the least alarm; they were again like two children their trouble over, all smiles.

"Can't you help me to search for it?" cried the almost crying Mrs. Gillett; "it must be here somewheres."

A silent search commenced; Miles enjoyed it, scarcely answering to himself wherefore he felt so light-hearted. We often feel thus before care and grief. All at once Mrs. Gillett uttered a cry between a groan and a scream. "I have it—I have it!" she exclaimed, in agony. "It was mine master took off the table! Oh, marciful! what am I to do now? You're lost, Miss Minnie, if they find out that you have left your room; they'll send you off before next week to Lancashire! We're all lost—all of us! How are you to get in? you can't creep through the keyhole," and she flung herself on the sofa in complete prostration of all power of thought.

"Tell me," said Miles, pale as death, and now the serious, anxious man again, "is what you say true? Are they really going to send Minnie away *there?*"

"Well, there's no use disguising it. I thought I wouldn't tell you yet; sorrow comes soon enough. Yes it is all settled," and Mrs. Gillett was again her kind self. Poor Minnie began crying bitterly. Miles had

been on the point of giving up the key; when he heard this, he again restored it to his pocket. He felt he might find friendly aid through it. "Minnie, dearest," he said, enclosing the crying girl in his arms, "don't weep *yet*, we have time before us. Trust to me, and my love neither will desert nor fail you. You shall never go there. This is a time *now* to act, to meet force with the strength my great love for you gives me. Come, Minnie, cheer up; don't let me leave you in tears."

"Don't leave me!" she cried, clinging to him. "I have so strong a fear upon me."

He was trembling himself, and nearly overcome. By a great effort he recovered himself; for, had he followed his heart's promptings, she would have quitted all for him that night. He knew, he felt his power over her, and trembled for his own resolution.

"Oblige me, darling," he whispered, with quivering lips. "Return to your room, confide in my unsleeping watchfulness over you; *you never shall go to Lancashire.* In the last extremity, rely upon my being there to save—*now* I cannot, *will* not; I should say, to do so, I should have to reproach myself." She looked up, not knowing his meaning, in answer to what her prayer had seemed to implore, namely, flight. She did not know what she uttered, in her terror at the idea of separation.

"It is all very well bidding her go to her room," chimed in Mrs. Gillett; "but tell me how is it to be done?"

"Search," he answered, now perfectly calm, though

pale. "You must have many keys—search, you will find one."

In a moment, the woman shook bunch after bunch out of basket, pocket, and cupboard. After a long and anxious examination, she selected three as "likely ones," and, armed with these, crept up-stairs alone, to try them first.

"Dearest," whispered he hurriedly, after she left the room, "there are things we must trust no one with—never name my visit to your room. I might, possibly, come again thus, but I will not; I would not have your fame endangered—oh, not even if by those visits I could win you! But do this: look from your window at eleven to-morrow night, and I will devise some means of communicating safely with you. I fear Gillett will serve us no more; the poor woman is alarmed at possible consequences."

"Hush! here she comes," ejaculated Minnie; and, as she spoke, the woman came hastily in: there was joy on her countenance.

"Come," she said, in a low tone, "I've found one; and, if they catch me at these tricks again, they may leave me in the lurch!" She was evidently addressing her thoughts to some invisible Fates. No entreaties could move her obdurate determination—she was firm.

Embarrassments chill the old heart, and quicken the young. The two parted, as such a parting would naturally be, in the uncertainty of soon meeting. Miles was turned out unceremoniously, first; and then the tearful Minnie was taken up to her prison; and Mrs.

Gillett promised "to think it over, and see what could be done." And thus she left her to her reflections, which were any thing but cheering. Poor girl! had her mother lived, and been a good, sensible woman, the child would have been like a lovely parterre, rich in beautiful flowers, from among which the weeds had been judiciously eradicated. As it was, full of warm and generous affections, they had been badly directed by contrary interests. Her aunts and uncle all conceived, and justly, that they had an equal right to her regard, duty, and obedience. Most unfortunately, all pulled different ways. Juvenal and Sylvia wore her spirit by bad, peevish tempers; only Dorcas could have supplied a mother's place, and her power was almost neutralized by the other two. Thus, Minnie had grown up with an independence of mind not often met with at her age. She loved Dorcas dearly; but her keen perception made her perfectly alive to all the absurdity of Juvenal and Sylvia. Her heart had nursed up almost all its warmth of love, to cast the whole of it on one die—Tremenhere's faith and love. She had, fortunately, chosen a worthy object, and yet one unfitting herself in many ways.

He was impassioned, impetuous, jealous: one to exact all from her; and even then, when her soul lay bare before him, suspect that a warmer affection might be found there, if he but knew the talisman which would unlock the secret recesses of it. He had a want of confidence in himself, which would cause him many a bitter hour. Had she loved and married Skaife, her life would have been one of the most complete happiness this earth could

have afforded. As it was, her whole soul was given to Tremenhere—he absorbed all. In the confidence of her young, childish heart, she could conceal no part of it from him: she loved like a slave, ready to obey him blindly in all things, unquestioning, undoubting. He was her master, before whom she crouched in perfect contempt of self, and hugged her chains. And this was the man they threatened to separate her from! Though the mortal woman wept at her oppression, the immortal soul laughed them to scorn!—they *could not* make her forget him!

The day following these events, Miles had a long interview with Skaife, to whom he had become deeply indebted in gratitude for his efforts in his favour. A sincere friendship had sprung up between them, yet not without some bitterness to Skaife, who could not yet eradicate Minnie's thought from his heart. Though graven there in bitterness, he sincerely wished to make her happy, and felt she would, in all human probability, be so with Tremenhere—loving him, and so well beloved. But even this desire of promoting her happiness, made him conscientiously refuse to accede to a solicitation of Tremenhere's, namely, to perform a private marriage between them. It will be seen this latter's resolutions were fading away before the probable trouble before them—thus it occurred. On leaving Minnie the evening they met, as we have seen, he walked homeward in deep thought; the more he reflected upon her threatened removal, the more he trembled for the result. He did not know her sufficiently well—

he deemed that, like most girls, though all affection then, once removed—persecuted, threatened, coerced—her spirit would give way, and she, perhaps, become the wife of his cousin—Minnie, his Minnie! It was a spiritualized madness the thought; for he felt it would haunt him even in the grave—that nothing could throw a veil of oblivion over it. He had never spoken *half* his passionate love to her—he feared lest, in giving vent to it, it might master and carry him away to some deed he afterwards should bitterly regret—such, for instance, as eloping with her. His ideas of women, were more than ordinarily rigid, in young men. He had thought and suffered so much on his mother's account, in whose case, though he did not for an instant suspect her virtue, still, he feared there had been some imprudence—some laxity in necessary caution, to have created this long, and as yet unavailing, search for proof of her marriage. He fancied it had been private, or by some minister not of legal ordination—he scarcely knew what to imagine. And yet, in the face of all this—driven by the fear of losing Minnie, he implored Skaife to marry them privately.

"I have yet one more effort to make," he said, "to gain her uncle's consent—if that fail me, then there will only be ourselves to rely upon."

"Knowing you as I do, even in this short space of time," answered Skaife, "let me implore you *never* to lead her, however slightly, from the path of duty. I know—I am sure—it would rise in your heart against her, some day."

"I would not dream of it, except in an extreme case,"

said Tremenhere; "but if they take her away, what will my position then be? *There* she will be under the eye of one—my cousin—who has the devil's cunning. They will act upon her heart in every way. Poor child!—what would she be in their hands?"

"And what would your feelings then be, were she privately your wife? How could you endure in absence all she would be made to suffer?"

"I should have a security, Skaife. They could not force her; and we could but acknowledge our union, even though before the time I myself should wish to do so. I would be again master of the house yonder, before I claimed her."

"You are too sanguine, I fear, in your hopes. I do not for an instant suspect your rights; but I do your power of proving them. There have been too wily persons at work for you ever to discover the lost clue. Seven years have passed, and, were Miss Dalzell your wife, could you patiently wait and labour as many more —perhaps even then without success—and leave her your unacknowledged wife?"

"Pshaw!" replied Tremenhere impatiently, "you argue like a man—a clergyman, bound to give good advice—and one who has never loved!"

He was quite ignorant that the other had ever been a suitor of Minnie's. Skaife looked fixedly at him—then, turning aside, choked down a sigh, and answered with seeming calmness—

"Not as a mere clergyman by profession—bound to throw in his advice on every occasion where there is an

opportunity, for form's sake; but as a sincere friend to both. Tremenhere, I beseech you, think well on all you do respecting Miss Dalzell. *I* believe her to possess strong affections, and far more strength of mind than you give her credit for."

"It may be so. I am sure she loves me now; but she is very young, and ignorant of the world. How could she be certain of resisting the threats and importunities of my enemies?"

"If so weak, how would she be able to pass through the world, and its many devious paths? How never swerve from the straight one? You wrong her; believe me, she is stronger than you imagine in soul and mind."

"Well, perhaps so—I hope so; but, as my wife, *I* should ever be there to sustain her."

"Not always, perhaps. Depend upon it, a woman never shows her true strength, of either virtue or forbearance, until she has to rely upon herself *alone*. Much as I wish to oblige you, Tremenhere, my anxiety to *serve* both, is greater. I cannot be a party to any secret marriage. I *know* it would not be for the happiness of either."

"Thank you, Skaife," answered the other, offering his hand in all candour of heart. "I know whatever you do, is conscientiously done; so now for my last hope. In peace, adieu!" And they parted.

CHAPTER XVI.

Juvenal sat in the library, concocting a letter to his counsellor and friend, Burton, when the servant threw open the door, and announced "Mr. Tremenhere." Juvenal was not a very courageous man, more especially unsupported; the pen slid from his fingers, and he staggered to his feet. "Stop!" he cried to the servant, but the voice was so faint that the man did not hear it; then he made a sort of rush towards the bell, but catching the other's calm, contemptuous smile, he stopped irresolute. "Pardon me, Mr. Formby," said Miles quietly; "but I think this interview were as well between ourselves: I see you are about summoning witnesses."

"Pray, sir," asked Juvenal, forcing an appearance of calmness most foreign to his real state, "may I ask the motive of this intrusion?"

"One," answered the other, "which I think scarcely merits so harsh a term, Mr. Formby. I came to save you the trouble of answering a letter I sent, presuming that, as a gentleman, you purpose doing so, even though probably time has not permitted you to accomplish that intention yet." Tremenhere's indignation overcame his

prudence, when he found himself in the presence of Minnie's persecutor.

"Do you come here to insult me, sir?" asked Juvenal, amazed at this tone and manner.

"Pardon me, Mr. Formby; no. I was led away by an excusable surprise at your want of courtesy towards one, with whom you were once on terms, at all events, of harmony; one, myself, who has never, by any act, forfeited his right to your good opinion."

Juvenal was dreadfully embarrassed. He did not like summoning an attendant to listen to perhaps a few unpleasant truths against himself; he felt Tremenhere's cause was the just one.

"Pray, sir," he said at last, "what do you call your unjustifiable pursuit of my niece, Miss Dalzell?"

"That is a recent crime in your eyes. I was alluding to a prejudice against *poor* Miles Tremenhere, who, as master of the manor-house, was permitted to style himself your acquaintance at least; but it is not of wrongs—of *past* wrongs—I come to speak. I come, Mr. Formby, to you, as Miss Dalzell's uncle and guardian, seeking an answer to my solicited permission to address her as a suitor."

"Your audacity surpasses all I ever heard of," cried Juvenal, bounding from his chair, into which he had dropped. "It more than surpasses all I have been told you were capable of."

"By my worthy cousin, but you are wrong. I come in no insolence of tone or manner, however your dislike may so construe them; but as gentleman to gentle-

man—suitor, *accepted* suitor by the lady, to solicit her hand from her guardian." He stood calm and dignified as he spoke; he had evidently set himself a task in this visit—one to go through, before more decided steps, but with little hope of success.

"My answer," said Juvenal, decidedly, though his tone was querulous and weak, "is—that nothing shall ever induce me to consent to Miss Dalzell's marriage with yourself!"

"May I ask your reasons?"

"I do not consider myself obliged to give any; one, however, I will accord you—the lady is engaged."

"Of that I am fully aware—irrevocably engaged."

"If you mean to yourself," cried Juvenal, his anger mastering his fear, "I tell you, I defy you—I forbid it. She shall never marry a nameless, unprincipled man like yourself—one who could attack my friend, Marmaduke Burton, in the ruffianly manner you have done."

"Hush!" said the other, advancing with a soft, calm step; "not a breath even against the dead. You term me a nameless man; that will be proved incorrect some day soon, I hope."

Juvenal shrunk back alarmed. "Keep back!" he cried, "or I will summon aid."

"Do not alarm yourself, Mr. Formby," said Tremenhere, retreating contemptuously. "I would not touch, still less harm, any one dear to, or allied to Miss Dalzell—rest well assured of that; for all I have done to Marmaduke Burton, I would do it again in my just indignation. Did he tell you all? Did he tell you

of our first meeting in his apartment, when I chastised the cowardly cur for his base seduction of one almost a sister to me?"

"*His* seduction?" exclaimed Juvenal—"*your's*, you mean?"

"*Mine!*" ejaculated Miles, under his breath from surprise at this infamous charge. "Mine!—did he tell you this?"

"Tell me?—yes! and you know it to be true; he spoke of it with regret, and of your infatuation in guilt, in having taken the girl away to town, where she awaits your coming—and it is to your base arms you would take my innocent niece!"

"'Tis false—false as his own black heart!" thundered Miles, and the red blood mantled in his face, the eyes shot fire. "If this alone be the cause of your *just* dislike to me—believing this—if I *prove* it false, may I then hope to win Miss Dalzell at your hands?"

In his heart, Juvenal did not believe this of Miles; he cared little who had been the seducer of Mary Burns, but it suited his purpose to think Miles guilty.

"You cannot prove your innocence," he said; but his uncertain glance shrank from the other's bold, steadfast one.

"I can, and will, if that be the only barrier!" exclaimed the hopeful man. "By the girl herself, Mr. Skaife, your sister Miss Dorcas Formby—by many."

"It could not alter my determination," stammered Juvenal. "I care little about proving, or disproving it,

as either way, I should never consent to your marriage with my niece."

Miles's foot beat impatient time on the floor, on which his gaze was fixed, with the knitted brow above it. By an immense effort over himself, he at last looked up, in appearance composed. "I came resolved," he said, "to bear all, suffer any insult for her sake—I came to conciliate if *possible;* and now, once and again, Mr. Formby, I ask you to consent, or, if not that, give her her liberty; give me hope, and I will make a name to win her with, better than any mere birth could bring me; but *that* too, I feel, I shall regain, and triumph over my enemy. I will win wealth—all—only give me hope; you see I implore now, for both our sakes."

"Hope to you—liberty to her?" laughed Juvenal, ironically, encouraged by Miles's softened tone. "I tell you she shall regain her liberty as Marmaduke Burton's wife—only then."

"You are resolved?—take time to consider." Miles's voice was low and emphatic.

"I need no consideration," answered the excited man; "my mind is made up, and my word pledged!" He felt in himself that Miles was too noble for him to have personal violence to dread at his hands—he spoke undauntedly.

"Then, hear me!" said Miles, striding close to him, and whispering hoarsely from intense feeling; "I, too, pledge you my word, that if you and all the powers of earth leagued against it, Minnie Dalzell shall be mine! Now, look to it. I have nothing now to restrain my

impulse. I have offered you every honourable proposition that man could offer; she loves me—this I know; and war let it be between us, and the victory and Minnie mine! So, look to it! You have driven me to my own resources—do not hereafter blame either her or me!"

"I defy you!—you can do nothing!" shouted Juvenal, rushing to the bell, intending to order him out by a servant. Miles made no further reply, but, striding to the door, went forth as if the meeting had been one in all good fellowship. As he quitted the house, Juvenal stood petrified, gazing after him. But the tall figure strode on, and never once turned or hesitated.

"He cannot—he cannot approach her!" said Juvenal confidently. "I'll watch—Gillett shall watch; and next week I'll take her to Lancashire. No one but Burton shall know the day, or my plans: and *then* we can indeed defy him!" And the self-confident man sat down to finish his letter to Burton, resolved to mention Tremenhere's visit to no one else, unless questioned about it. Days passed, and nothing had occurred to arouse a suspicion in his mind that Miles was at work. He was not a man to suspect the under-current of a stream, smooth on the surface. He was planning, and another was watching. Even yet, Miles could not find resolution to urge Minnie to an extreme step; they had not met since the night in Mrs. Gillett's room, but they had *seen* each other. The age of romance will never quite expire, even in this one of matter-of-fact: while Love exists, he will summon his own regal court around

him, where pure hearts are in his keeping, and their love-knots not gilded. Juvenal never dreamed of watchings and wooings in those later hours of the night, when even his green tea failed to keep him wakeful; and, in those hours, Tremenhere stood beneath Minnie's window, and a cord from a trembling hand was their telegraphic wire to speed their communications from one to another. No one had seen Tremenhere since the day he quitted Juvenal, who became impressed with the idea that he had quitted in despair; but the cleverer general was quietly watching events from Farmer Weld's, who was too true to him to betray his concealment to any one. Even Mrs. Gillett thought he had left, and blessed her stars, and every thing else of lucky influence, which had induced him to quit, for now her mind was at rest. Only Burton suspected the truth; he knew Miles's disposition too well, and, consequently, strongly urged Juvenal to bring Minnie off, at a moment's notice, *at night;* and this the other resolved to do. Dorcas had a long interview with Skaife, and a certain want of energy in her character was gently censured by him, for her leaving Minnie so long without even a line: "What can I do?" she asked, irresolute; "my brother will not let me see her; I am waiting quietly till his strange humour pass away."

"And meanwhile you leave Miss Dalzell under, I must say, an unwarrantable oppression, which will prey on her proud spirit, unsupported, uncomforted. She will unquestionably think herself deserted by all, and the consequences may be fatal."

Skaife would not say more, or betray Miles even by a hint. Dorcas, acting upon this advice, wrote to Minnie, and Mrs. Gillett bore it—but the missive came too late. The girl's heart had brooded so long in silence, and supposed neglect, which, as far as Dorcas was concerned, had been want of decision, and that energy which might have brought Juvenal to reason, for her every thought had been her niece's; but she resigned herself too quietly to her brother's prohibition of visits. Dorcas said to herself, "I'll wait patiently—his humour will change—Minnie knows I love her." When, however, we are in trouble, a little *assurance* of affectionate watching is very comforting—silence often breeds doubt—it did in Minnie's case. She was on one hand persecuted by Juvenal and Sylvia, and unsupported on the other; 'tis then not to be wondered at, if she threw all her confidence and affection on the one who so well returned her love—Tremenhere; and her aunt's letter fell cold, uncared for, from her hand, and the resolution to act for herself grew only stronger. While she was in this state, Tremenhere was silently watching all. When men are very much in love, they are very like the fabled bucket, through which every drop of water passed again as soon as drawn from the well. Juvenal had a pet groom—his right-hand man in all things—his factotum, and he certainly merited his master's confidence; but—he fell in love! and a sort of Montagu and Capulet affair it was with a dairymaid at, and poor relation of, Farmer Weld's. This stout wench was in the confidence of her master, and a firm adherent of Tremenhere's,

so she listened to the wooing of her lover, not from any persuasion of the little blind god, but simply to know all that was passing at Gatestone. It is not from evil propensities that servants always speak of their master's affairs, but because persons not gifted with imagination, speak everyday facts; thus groom Thomas, like the bucket in question, drew all from the well of his master's heart, to moisten the greedy clay of woman's curiosity; and, in return, he got chaff which blew away before the winds, of service to no one. Thomas, too, was very wise in his own conceit, and said to himself, "Poor gal, she's so much in love with me, she can't keep nothing to herself!" and he posted off to his master with acounts of letters received from Tremenhere from town, and, while he carried off his winnowings, Sally trudged home with many a good oat-cake at his expense. This continued about a week; and every night, owl-like, Miles crept forth, and Minnie's soft voice whispered "Good-night, dearest!" as she let down, and drew up their respective letters.

One day Sally returned from an evening walk with Thomas, in a state of much agitation; she learned from him that Mr. Dalby, the lawyer, was always now closeted with his master, and that Thomas had been sent in solemn secresy to Harrogate, to order a chaise and posters for the following evening at eight; and his master had told him to be sure and say nothing to *anybody* about it, especially not to Miss Formby, or Miss Dorcas, as he was going to take off Miss Dalzell to Lancashire at a minute's notice; so all must be pre-

pared, and he, Thomas, ready to go with them—that a word in the house would ruin all!

"Lor'!" ejaculated the really astonished Sally.

"Ain't it fine?" said the man; "and won't Miss be taken by surprise? as master says it's very wrong of her to fly in his face, as she does—in coorse, he must know best what's good for her; and nobody sha'n't know it from me, I'll take precious care of that!" and he rubbed his hands, and winked knowingly.

"And don't Miss Minnie suspect, think ye?"

"Not she, nor nobody; it's all been done main clever, I can tell you; and as the shay drives round to the front door, Master and Mr. Dalby goes up and brings her down, and we postesses two posts, that there mayn't be no row in this part, 'cause she might kick up a to-do at the station, and Mr. Dalby goes part ways on the dicky with me!"

"Does he?" said Sally, colouring at this treachery. "He's quite given up young Miss himself, then?"

"Oh, yes! from all I hears, and I'm pretty 'cute, he and the squire be all in all; it's to Miss Burton's young miss be goin'." This latter speech was uttered in a whisper.

"Ah!" ejaculated Sally, in thought.

"What be 'e thinkin' on?" asked Thomas, pressing the arm which reposed on his own. "I guess you be thinkin' there won't be all this fuss when we marries," etc., etc., etc. Here the amorous swain rushed off into a maze of love's intricacies, little interesting to the

reader, or indeed to Sally, who took the earliest opportunity of finding the silken cord, and getting out of it, leaving the cautious Thomas watching, in the twilight, her buxom figure as she sped homewards. Red and excited she entered the farm kitchen, and, flying up the stairs, tapped at a door, and then bounced in. Tremenhere sat there, and not less than her own, was his agitation, when she unloaded her budget; he thanked his faithful messenger for her vigilance, and after a consultation with the homely farmer, who was summoned to the room, this latter started off for Harrogate, to discover if really the chaise had been ordered, as reported. With some little manœuvring he found out, beyond a doubt, that it was a fact. What he then did—what they had mutually decided upon—will be shortly seen. To have carried off Minnie at that late hour would have been impracticable—How succeed? this was their first thought, but no posters could be obtained as relays; there would be no train to assist them so advanced in the night, for he could not see Minnie to convey the intelligence until nearly midnight. To fly, and be overtaken, were worse than all. Poor Miles paced his room in an agony of mind nothing can paint; until that supreme moment he did not know how dear Minnie was, all his energy seemed for a while crushed; he clenched his hands, and the thick, knotted veins swelled in his forehead, as the heaving breast sent the boiling blood to his brain. He cursed his own folly, his scruples for waiting so long, now all these had disappeared; present fears, future reflections on imprudence, all were cast

aside: he only saw Minnie separated from himself, in Marmaduke's and her uncle's power, with Dalby to back them in villainy. He cared for nothing which might be said, he forgot all his mother's wrongs, from perhaps a want of strict prudence, (of error he never dreamed,) which had so long upheld him in a resolution to only win *his* wife before all the world, and by all its most rigid laws of prudence and right. He sat down at last, with his watch clutched in his hand, counting the weary moments till he could visit Gatestone. A cold sweat hung on his brow, as he thought some unforeseen event, impossible to conquer, might mar all, and thus he sat, in the bitter agony of a lone heart, which, though it may find kind, sympathizing friends, finds not one to comprehend all its suffering—not one to speak as it would. As the weary hours crept by, he was worn almost to woman's weakness; for at a moment when he needed all to support himself in calmness, Farmer Weld, or perhaps Sally, would enter his room, or the farmer's good dame, and by their well-meant, but quiet reasoning, nearly drive his warm temperament frantic; it was not only one fear he had, but dozens came crowding around him, for all was cast on one chance. He could not say—"If this fail—well, to-morrow."

No, there was no morrow for him if the project crumbled to earth. She would be away under coercion and watchings, and these doubled, if they discovered any attempt of his, even though it should prove abortive. In this fearful state, he at last quitted the farm. The

night air revived him, and he felt calm as he stopped under Minnie's window; more especially when her little white hand drew aside the curtain, and she looked forth.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE night passed—then succeeded morning—noon—and evening. Juvenal had been very busy all day. Nobody but Dalby, who was closeted with him, and the trusty Thomas, knew wherefore. The two first worthies had it all to themselves; for Sylvia felt piqued with her recreant *protégé* for preferring interest to love. Dorcas disliked him much. It therefore was not a very sociable dinner party that day at six, when the four sat down together. We will leave them in their monosyllabic conversation, spiced with occasional words of secret meaning between Juvenal and his guest, and go up-stairs with Mrs. Gillett, to Minnie's room, when she entered with the prisoner's dinner. The latter was sitting at a table; before her was a casket, out of which all the little treasures of her young life were taken, and spread on the table, and as she eyed them, her eyes were swimming in tears; yet she looked flushed, and nervous. When Gillett entered, she involuntarily sprang up, and turned pale, as in terror.

"Dear heart alive!" exclaimed the woman, "how very narvous you are, poor child! And so I told master to-day, and he has promised you shall soon be at liberty; so cheer up, there's a dear." She spoke very kindly;

but Minnie looked fixedly at her, to read if she too were plotting against her. She was beginning that worst pain—suspicion of all. But poor Gillett was white as snow in this affair; and thus Minnie read her clear, kind look, and she stretched out her hand and clasped her's; and with the act, tears rolled down her cheek. Juvenal, by Dalby's advice, trusted no woman. This man had an instinctive dread and knowledge, that the female heart is *generally* too kind to unite in a wrong act, unless the possessor be unworthy her sex. Man acts without thought often, and consents without reflection, to a crooked deed of seeming uprightness. Perhaps woman's natural love of diving into mysteries makes her fathom all, and *then* judge for herself.

"Now, don't—there's a dear!" cried Mrs. Gillett, dropping on one knee, and taking Minnie's hand in both of her's; "don't cry. I hate to see you cry, Miss, indeed, I do; it always reminds me of your poor dear mamma; she used to sit and cry, so silent like, till she went after the captain."

"Don't talk of her *now*, Gillett—my good Gillett!" whispered the girl, shuddering; "I've been looking at her picture—see, here it is." She took a miniature from the table, "And—and—don't you think she looks frowningly upon me? I have thought so all day."

"Lauk, dear! how can the picture change? There it is; and it can't look sweeter, nor crosser—poor, dear lady!—she never looked cross on any one."

"Don't speak of her!" cried Minnie, in agony, dropping her head on the woman's shoulder, and sobbing.

"I told your uncle how it would be," said the other, trying to soothe Minnie, as she would have done a child, by patting her back; "but come, look up, it will all go right soon, you'll get out; and now, Master Miles is gone (and I'm sure I'm glad of it) all will be as before, and——"

Minnie rose hastily, and stood looking at the woman, as if uncertain how to act; her tears were burning on her cheeks—her lips opened to speak. Then Miles's cautions came over her, and she turned away with a sigh. Mrs. Gillett rose, and, smoothing down her apron, began laying the table with perfect composure, and confidence that all would soon be well. Suddenly Minnie approached, and, grasping her arm, said, so wildly that the other herself stood transfixed, "Remember, Gillett —my good Gillett—whatever may happen, they drove me to it. Do not let them say all unchecked against me;—remind them how they locked me up—remind Aunt Dorcas how she left me, and did not insist upon seeing, to comfort me—remind them, that I only met Mr. Tremenhere once, wilfully, and that he had known me as a little child—do not forget all this, Gillett, but remind them often of it." And she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and turned away.

"Poor darling!" said the housekeeper, "they have been cruel; but it was not their faults—Master listens to them as he shouldn't listen to—Come, eat a bit of chicken—just a bit: I watched it cooking for you myself—do, there's a dear!" But all her coaxing was vain. "I'll come and sleep on the sofa in her room to-night,"

said Gillett to herself; "she's low and narvous, poor child!"

"What's that?" cried Minnie, stopping in her hurried walk round the room.

"Only the time, dear, striking; it's half-past six!"

"The old hall clock!" whispered the girl—"my mother's clock—I wonder if I shall ever hear it again after to-night! I hope I may—I hope to Heaven I may!" And she slid gently on her knees, and raised her hands upwards. Gillett stood looking on in amazement, not unmixed with deep emotion.

"Miss Minnie, dear, shall I stay, or go?" she whispered, touching her arm. Minnie started up.

"Go," she said, hurriedly, looking towards the door—"go, and don't tell any one I have been agitated, or crying. Let me be quiet a short time, and—and—Heaven bless you, dear Gillett, for all your kindness—I *never* shall forget it!"

She threw her arms round the woman's neck, and kindly embraced her; then, opening the door, said hurriedly, "Now, go, dear Gillett, and leave me quiet awhile."

The simple woman, without the slightest suspicion of harm, quitted the room gently, and locked the door. Minnie stood one moment, with clasped hands, listening, then turning round, she seemed, by a great effort, to shake off all lethargy and doubt. Reverentially placing her mother's picture, and a gift of aunt Dorcas's, in her bosom, she drew from her pocket a key, and with hasty hands threw over her shoulders a shawl; then, putting

on her bonnet, she stood one instant in deep thought—it was the final thought—one of war between resolution and doubt.

Near the old stile, in the holly-field, stood Miles Tremenhere. He was no longer the wild, excited man; a cold, stern resolution had replaced all other emotions. He stood there, resolved *to do*, even now, by force, should other means fail. It had been in vain he toiled with his brain to arrange things otherwise; all had seemed to go against him, trains, posters—all, and here he was, expecting Minnie at seven, knowing that at eight she would leave with her uncle, if his scheme failed.

"But it will not," he said between his teeth; "she has the key; they will be at table, and she can better escape down the stairs now than earlier. Should she *not* come, I will go up boldly and tear her from their power!"

He was desperate enough then to have attempted it. His face was cold and damp with the dew of suspense, his eyes strained with watching the way she should come; he had become so acutely wakeful, that he felt he could have heard her cry for help even there; and as moment after moment passed, and the heavy church clock in the distance chimed a quarter past seven, he groaned aloud. "Only three quarters more, and *they* will be there for her. Minnie! oh, Minnie! if they tore you from me now, I should smile on *any* deed to recover you! She does not come!"

He stood like a statue, only watching the way through the shrubbery. "I will go up and claim her," he cried at last, in desperation. "Hush! were those

wheels? *theirs*, to complete their good work. Hush!" and he listened, while his heart audibly beat. A hand was on his arm, and a voice, weak and thrilling like a nestling bird's, whispered, "Miles, I am here—let us go —'tis late—I have been seen." With the first word and touch, a cry burst from him, and Minnie was in an embrace of iron. What force might tear her from it? Outside the hedge a chaise was waiting, and to this he almost carried the nearly fainting girl; they had not far to drive, but a few short miles at the pace of their good quadrupeds; and before the clock struck eight, Tremenhere's heart beat wildly with rejoicing, beside his runaway bride, flying at the rate of Gretna steam-power, and an express train, to the north. Eight o'clock struck, and with the last stroke wheels were heard creaking on the gravel at Gatestone.

"Now, Dalby," said Juvenal, "the time's come, mind you are resolute; no woman's work. I daresay she'll make a fuss, but it is for her ultimate benefit, and besides I will not have my authority questioned." Sylvia and Dorcas had retired, quite ignorant of all. "Tell Mrs. Gillett to come here, and accompany us to Miss Dalzell's room," said Juvenal to the footman.

"I don't think Miss Dalzell has returned," said the man, innocently. "She only went out a few minutes since!" Dalby started, but Juvenal was quite composed. "You must be mistaken, Willis," he said. "Miss Dalzell is in her room. You probably saw one of the other ladies. Send Mrs. Gillett at once."

"Oh, dear me! no, sir," responded the man. "I

couldn't mistake my mississes for Miss Minnie; she passed me in the hall with her bonnet on, and said in her kind way, 'How d'ye do, Willis?' and I was so glad to see her about again, that I watched her through the gardens."

"Why the deuce didn't you mention this before?" exclaimed Dalby, alarmed. He was the first to recover himself.

"Well, sir," answered the man, trembling, "I thought master knew it. 'Twasn't for me to speak."

"There's something wrong," cried Juvenal, tumbling over Dalby's chair in his hurried rush towards the door. The other was half-way up-stairs, muttering a deep oath. If Minnie were lost to his master Marmaduke Burton, then would he be doubly a fool, having lost a good chance with the girl, backed as he had been by Sylvia; and of course he should be disgraced with the other.

By this time the house was alarmed—Dorcas stood very pale, clasping her cold hands together—Sylvia wouldn't believe it possible—and poor Mrs. Gillett was lamenting loudly, as Juvenal with trembling hands opened the door. There still was hope, for the door was well locked. All rushed in in a body: every thing was as we have seen it, but Minnie—the dinner untouched. How had she escaped? Not by the window, surely? No, that could not be. Willis had met her in the passage, and 'twas this unexpected meeting which had made her go round by the gardens instead of the shrubbery. This was the only hour in which Miles saw a chance for her escape, while all were at table. 'Twas

a bold stroke; but it had succeeded, like many a daring deed.

"Gillett, you know something of this!" cried Sylvia, turning towards her. Dorcas couldn't speak; she was crying bitterly; she guessed the truth. "No, as I hopes for marcy!" exclaimed the housekeeper; "I know nothing of it. I brought up her dinner, which you see, and she fell a-crying, and seemed quite down-hearted. Oh, dear! oh, dear! what was it she said, now?" and she tapped her forehead; "she told me to remind you all of such a many things, and to think I should forget every one on 'em!"

"Where could she have found a key?" asked Juvenal, suspiciously.

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Gillett, "here's mine," and she turned the lock with it. Suddenly it flashed across her mind, the confusion of keys in her room the night Juvenal came down, and Minnie and Miles were concealed. She said nothing; but felt perfectly convinced that one of them had taken a key away. At last, some one suggested that she was perhaps in the gardens. *No one* save Dorcas guessed the whole truth. Juvenal and Sylvia felt certain she would be found. Dalby thought so, too. Where could she go? Gillett was too much puzzled to think. Only Dorcas *knew* in her heart, that Miles was the instigator and partner of her flight. All her thoughts now were, not to find her; she felt that with a man so determined to organize, she was off and gone, but to secure her happiness, and, if possible, bring all to a happy termination and reconcilia-

tion. Gardens were searched—the house—grounds—all; but not a trace remained—then the village. At last a lad was found who had stood gaping at the chaise and posters in the lane, till the gentleman and lady stepped in and "driv away;" so there was no longer room to doubt. Dalby, hot with rage and disappointment, traced them to the railroad, three miles distant, whence he and Juvenal started off in pursuit.

The chaise which was to have carried off their victim, helped them on their errand—a rather galling reflection; for both Tremenhere and his bride were away, and away, miles before them; they had neither of them time to reflect on plans, on the future, which lay before them coiled like a serpent, and perhaps as much to be dreaded. On they flew, and, as the train stopped at each station, Minnie's heart sunk within her, dreading somehow to see her uncle there, awaiting her; and in agony, she clung to Miles, whose gentlest tones soothed the fair thing beside him, with her already sorrowing, but not repenting head, hidden in his bosom. At length the term of their journey drew to a close, they passed the Border—with every moment now, her terror, and his anxiety, grew apace. She could scarcely articulate; and, when a sudden whistle or stoppage occurred, a scream involuntarily burst from her very soul; for the lip was but the channel of utterance. But the Border was passed—the train and its many alarms was left behind their flying steps, and they stood side by side in a small room, awaiting the professional officiator in such cases—clergyman, he cannot be called. Minnie looked round, and

felt how little idea of so sacred a tie as marriage, that little, low room gave you. She turned timidly to Miles, who was gazing impatiently at the door—she drew near him.

"Miles—dearest," she whispered, laying a hand on his arm, "shall we not be married again? This place carries no hallowing thoughts to the heart."

"My Minnie, you have echoed my intention—the moment we arrive in town, we will doubly cement the sweet bonds of this day's forging!"

Here the officiator entered. He was a serious, matter-of-fact-looking man; he put on his spectacles, and scanned them closely; then, giving a sort of grunt, intimating some sort of feeling best understood by himself, he commenced—

"Stop!" cried Tremenhere; "I have forgotten a ring!"

Minnie was trembling violently—every thing startled her. He saw this, and, hastily glancing at his finger, said, "In such a cause, this will but sanctify it!" and he drew off the circle of gold. "Minnie," he whispered, "this was my mother's."

"Oh, not that!" she cried, shrinking back. "It has been so ill-fated!"

"You'd better not delay," suggested the man; "folks travel quickly now-a-days, and I have *buzness*, too."

"It will unite us the closer in our triumph over her enemies and ours, my Minnie."

She said no more, but a cold thrill passed over her as the ring made her Tremenhere's wife.

"Now ye're right," said the man, with a grim smile, which he intended to be jocular; "an' tak' care on her, for she's a sonsy leddy—puir young thing!"

"Minnie—my wife—my child—my all!" whispered Miles, drawing her on his heart. "Now we may defy them all, and fate—my own wife!" Even as he spoke, the heart at that moment chilled: another might have felt glad in the romance of their love and flight, Tremenhere choked down a sigh. He would have given all he ever hoped to gain, to be standing with Minnie in church, his licensed wife by friends, relatives, and, above all, the rules of prudence and right. It was not his fault, these stern ideas; circumstances had made him what he was.

They are once more in the train, and speeding away from the Border, towards town. Some twenty miles on their way, they stopped at a station where a down train was waiting. Minnie drew hastily back, and turned very pale: "My uncle," she whispered, "there —and Mr. Dalby!" She had many a dark storm to encounter before they met again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Tremenhere had in nothing deceived Minnie. He told her that in marrying him she wedded herself to an artist's struggles for fame, wealth, and position: this home was all he had to offer her, cheered by his devoted love. He was considered as one rising rapidly in the profession, but he had much still to achieve before prosperity would crown his efforts. Hitherto, he had saved every possible farthing for the great object of his thoughts; now, he would have to toil with double energy, not to lose sight of that, and support his wife also. But Minnie was so simple in her tastes, so generous, thoughtful, and loving, that it seemed to her another Paradise, their quiet little cottage in the outskirts of town, which Miles had succeeded in discovering, with a studio attached—or rather, a large room, which he converted into one. True, the gardens were not large and beautiful, like those at Gatestone; but then their very smallness made every flower as a friend. Each morning there was the matinal visit to be paid, the fresh buds on some favourite tree to be counted; and as she bent over their stem, a loving eye looked down upon her, a gentle hand clasped her small,

snowy neck, and then she looked up smiling, and the two went in to work. Her's was not very laborious, yet she fancied it absolutely necessary to the performance of his task: she mixed his colours, sorted his pencils, but, more frequently, leaned over his shoulder, with one tiny hand buried among his raven curls, which clustered, thick and glossy, in the nape of his neck. Thus she would watch the progress of his "Aurora chasing the Shades of Night;" which Aurora was a figure of angel lightness, with outstretched arms and hands, skimming through the air, her long, wavy hair flying, in the freshness of the morning breeze, like a cloud behind her; whilst before her fled Shades, clad in dark robes spangled with fading stars, and supported upon the clouds. It was a beautiful group, which Miles was painting to order. We have said Minnie had most lovely hair, like floss silk; when she unwove the plaits, it fell almost to her heel, not heavily, but like a vapour; you passed your hand through it, and it separated and floated in the air like a gossamer web. It was this magnificent mass which Miles had copied for his Aurora. He loved to look upon it; to a painter's eye it had an appearance of something spiritual. In vain he endeavoured to do it justice; for more than once, in despair, he had set all aside, and clasping his little wife in his arms, exclaimed, as he embraced it and her, "My child, I never shall accomplish this! Surely some sprite wove this veil, and will not allow me to represent it with my poor pencil! Not the best *artiste en cheveux* ever known, shall ever distort these fair locks with his vile grasp. I

am almost jealous when the air plays with them! Minnie, 'tis dreadful to suffer from jealousy! I hope you never may be a mother, darling; I should almost hate my own child, lying on your breast!"

"Hush, Miles!" she whispered, laying her hand on his mouth. "Do not speak even of jealousy; 'tis so false a passion, ever leading astray, ever leading us down some crooked path."

"Why, my pretty reasoner, what do you know of jealousy?" and he drew her close to his side, and smiled up in her face.

"Oh! I guess it, dear, from all I have read of its influence, it leads to so much error and bitterness; and——and——I will confess, dear Miles," she added, looking down, "I felt a pang of it myself, when you were absent the other day, in Sussex. I was wondering all day with whom you were walking, talking, amusing yourself; and whether you once, even, saw my spirit flit before your path!"

Miles looked down thoughtfully, doubtingly, a moment, then, raising his eyes, said carelessly—"You know, darling, why I went to Uplands Park. Lord Randolph Gray wished me to come, whilst he was down there, to choose a good light for my 'Aurora' when I have completed it, and also to make some other artistic arrangements, which cannot but prove of great service to me. My Minnie knows I am only an artist, obliged to follow as a profession what was once only pleasure."

"Well, are we not happy, Miles?—*I* am—oh! very—very happy—perfectly so, since my dear aunt Dorcas has

been to see her naughty niece; and, now, tell me all the persons you met at Uplands, for I knew there were several there, and you have always found something else to talk of, when I asked you."

"Oh! I paid little attention, I was so much engaged; there were his aunt, and several ladies, and——"

"I wonder where Dora is?" cried Minnie, hastily, like a child flying from one subject to another. "She has not answered my letter, and I wrote as soon as we were married in town, and that is two months since—'tis very unkind!"

"What an old wife you are, Minnie!" he said fondly, not paying attention to the other portion of her speech.

"Never mind that, Miles; let us talk of Dora. Do you know, I was half jealous of her; I thought you admired her; I thought two such could not meet without loving."

Despite his self-control, he coloured slightly, and merely ejaculated, "Pshaw!"

"I do declare, Miles, you are colouring! Well, I fancied my aunt Lady Ripley, and Dora, were perhaps at Uplands."

"What could make you think so?" he asked, slightly embarrassed.

"Because I know my aunt wishes Dora to marry Lord Randolph Gray; and, as so many ladies were there, I thought it probable she might be one."

"Silly child!—silly little girl!" he said, evasively.

"There—get such foolish thoughts out of your head, and give me one more sitting, darling, for this Aurorean veil of hair."

All else was cast aside when Miles had to be pleased. She forgot Dora, and every thing, and stood before him with her hair streaming back from her fair, innocent face—that face was Miles's greatest torment in his task. It was the very one he could have desired for his picture; but for worlds he would not have laid it upon canvass for indifferent eyes to look upon; in vain model after model sat to him—some were very lovely; and when he thought his wish accomplished, and but a few finishing touches were required to complete the face—nothing but the working up, when no model was of further use, involuntarily—his pencil, faithful to the memory of his heart, moulded the unfinished face with an imperfect likeness of his beloved wife; and though he sighed whilst obliterating it, yet nothing would have tempted him to expose that to a stranger's gaze; perhaps, a questioning one, which would seek the original of so perfect a creation. No, she was his—only his. Could he have insisted upon such a thing without appearing absurd, she should never have quitted the house, unless closely veiled—his was true, all-absorbing affection. There was no selfish vain-glory in it; that feeling which makes a man parade the object of his idolatry before the multitude, to delight his ears with the hum of praise her beauty might elicit, and from the pedestal of his exclusive right, look down in pitying compassion on the multitude doing homage to her charms—nothing

of this could move Tremenhere, except to feel contempt. His was too noble a nature to be gratified by the injury of others—he only asked to be left in peace and seclusion with this fair being he had so hardly won. *He*, for the cold heartless world, to toil for her, and with it—*she*, to solace his hours of peace and most unworldly love. We will leave them awhile, and step back to Gatestone. At the moment her successful flight was no longer a mystery—the only one was, how she had escaped—there were not wanting those to instil into Juvenal's mind an idea, that he had an enemy on his hearth; and poor Dorcas was the suspected person. She had favoured Minnie's escape, and not all her assurances to the contrary, could remove the impression; and, when she expressed her determination to visit Minnie, not the slightest shadow of doubt remained. Little-minded persons must have an imaginary trouble, if they do not possess a real one—they could not exist without something to worry them to death. Dorcas was the living source of sorrow to Juvenal and Sylvia; and, had she not been patience itself, *they* would assuredly have driven her into her grave by their unceasing fire of innuendoes, when they actually abstained from open accusations. However, she bore all placidly, and finally started, to the deep indignation of both, for town, accompanied by Mr. Skaife. This latter had become perfectly reconciled to Minnie's marriage. His love had not been that of a Tremenhere, but a quiet, placid affection, much more like a *hothouse* friendship, than actual love, riper than an ordinary out-of-door feeling of that genus. The moment he heard that she was positively a wife, he choked down

a little sigh, and from that instant she became the wife of one he called friend—only a being to be much respected, and served in every way in his power; and it was strange that Tremenhere, with all his jealousy, so thoroughly read and appreciated the other's character, that not the slightest feeling of that kind crossed his mind, on his and Minnie's account. They met as brother and sister might have done; and Tremenhere looked on and smiled, as Skaife clasped her hands—an action he could not have borne from any other; for he had the purest, warmest, Spanish blood in his veins, not one drop of his father's calm English—he was all his mother's child.

It would be impossible to give an adequate idea of the fury of Juvenal, when he discovered that he and Dalby had arrived just an hour too late to prevent Minnie's marriage. Dalby was bitterness itself, and in every way fostered the feeling against the delinquents. Thus he made himself agreeable to Juvenal, and *secured* a footing at Gatestone; as he felt rather uncertain how Marmaduke Burton might receive him, on his being made acquainted with the discomfiture of himself and partisans, and the good generalship of Tremenhere. But Burton could not afford to lose such a man as Dalby; though he blamed him in no measured terms, still, in his heart, he knew how difficult it was to daunt or overthrow his cousin. He accused himself more than any one else, for leaving the spot, and thus losing so great a battery against the enemy as his own cunning would have proved. Now this battle was lost, there only remained one thing to him—revenge; and this pale-faced spectre haunted his every thought.

Great was Minnie's joy when she flung herself into her dear aunt's arms; all former annoyance was forgotten; she only saw one she loved as a mother, one whose face was wanting to cheer her home and hearth. As soon as Tremenhere could so arrange it after their return, they had been again, and more sacredly, married than in their Border marriage. Nothing was wanting, then, to Minnie's happiness, but forgiveness; and this Dorcas promised to lose no opportunity of obtaining. How happy the young wife was, in showing all the mysteries of her home, her excellence as a housekeeper, her garden, her fruits, all, to her aunt! Poor child! she was so inexperienced in all, yet withal so very anxious to save every possible expense, that the aim of Miles's life might not be lost sight of. "Only look, dear aunty!" she cried, raising in her pretty fingers the leaves which partially concealed some mellowing peach on the sunny wall,—"did you ever see such beauties? We had none so fine at Gatestone!" Poor child, once more! there was nothing good or fair but where Miles existed —nothing could prosper unless beneath his eye. Alas, for the days of sorrow! when the woman shall look back, after her weary pilgrimage through life, and remember the one sunny spot of childhood, where winter never came—all the year one summer in her memory, the fruits and flowers in the gardens of which, were riper, and blossomed fairer, than any elsewhere! It is the heart—the heart—the heart beneath which they grow!—the heart all lightness and purity!

Skaife, we have seen, accompanied Dorcas to town;

and after the first lecture on her imprudence had, as a matter of course, been duly delivered by the latter, all settled down in perfect happiness; for even Skaife almost ceased to remember that, in the man before him, he saw a successful rival. Poor Dorcas would fain have remained longer than the fortnight she had awarded herself; but she received such fulminating letters from home, that the thing was impracticable; and so she left the abode of love and peace, perfectly assured of the continuance of Minnie's happiness, and promising to do all in her power to effect a reconciliation. This would have been easily accomplished, if she had only had Juvenal and Sylvia to deal with; but, unhappily, Dalby and the latter were friends again, and the former had Marmaduke Burton to back him up in all wickedness; though now, had the uncle and aunt reasoned—"How could the affair be improved by anger?" they might have acted differently. But there are some persons who never reason: decidedly, these were of that class.

We will now take our readers to Uplands Park, the day of Miles's expected visit there by Lord Randolph Gray. Business in town had detained this gentleman from that rendezvous of fashionable men, in the month of August—Scotland. It was near the end of the following month, and a select few were assembled for shooting, and its accompaniment of flirtation, in a country-house, where there exists so much more *laissez aller* than in town. Lord Randolph's aunt, the Countess of Lysson, took the head of the lady department at her bachelor nephew's. A word about this nephew: He was

one whose mould had assuredly not been broken when he was born—there were hundreds like him; he was one in a *cornet* of comfits, very nice, but very insipid—the filling up of the world between the good and bad. A good-natured man, in short, with plenty of money. Some one persuaded him that he was, or ought to be, passionately fond of pictures, because he was of yachting and other fashionable amusements. Now, what possible connection could exist between these two, except as far as mere fashion went, it would be difficult to define. However, he was very fond of handsome women, and these are more or less the subject of the pencil; consequently, on his return to town from Italy, where he had seen much of Miles in society, as a rising artist, he sought him out, and engaged his pencil on "The Aurora," before alluded to. Besides, he had liked the man, and discovering that even at home, men of talent were warmly received into society, he followed the reading of others (for he possessed not one single original idea,) and invited him cordially to his house. But the visit to Uplands was one more of business than pleasure, else Miles would never have quitted Minnie. No one was aware, of his mere acquaintances, that Tremenhere was a man who had lost the position he had lost; he was known as a man of good family and cultivated understanding—no one inquired beyond: married or single—who cared to inquire? He was an agreeable companion, and therefore many sought his society. When he arrived at Uplands, the first person almost he met was Lady Dora, who was there with her mother. Not all

her self-possession checked the deep glow which overspread her cheek. It was half the suddenness of the meeting, and half indignant pride, that he should have degraded her cousin, as she deemed it, to the level of a mere artist's wife. They met in the drawing-room before dinner. There were only two or three persons yet assembled, and these were dowagers, sitting cosily beside a cheering wood-blaze, before the lamps were lighted. It was a large comfortable room, and already the rich crimson curtains fell before the windows. It had been a chilly, rainy day; and Lady Dora, having passed some hours of it in the billiard-room, now sat before one of Erard's most brilliant pianos, playing desultory strains, as they occurred to her memory. Lady Lysson had not yet appeared, nor Lady Dora's mother. Tremenhere stood an instant in the doorway; he had been sitting in Lord Randolph's room with him, ever since quitting the one assigned to him, after changing his dress for dinner. His arrival had occurred, as those things do in country houses—a matter of no moment, or object of inquiry to any one. He came—sat in his host's room—dressed for dinner—descended to the drawing-room—and, until Lady Dora looked up from her own thoughts, and saw him at the door, no one knew an addition had taken place to the circle assembled at Uplands. As he entered, the two dowagers raised their eyes carelessly, and glanced over him. He was some gentleman, or he wouldn't be there,—one of the common mould, doubtless. People always take this for granted, till the lion slips out of the ass's skin in which their imagina-

tions clothe him, and shows his fangs and claws; then folks either put themselves into a position of defence, or try to cut his claws; but this latter is rather a dangerous game, unless, like the picture of a celebrated artist, Monsieur Camille Roqueplan, the lion become "*amoureux*," and then any thing may be done with him by the one loved hand.

We digress—Miles was an ass in the dowagers' eyes—one of their host's mould; so they glanced him over, and, *sotto voce*, continued their perforations in somebody's character.

Lady Dora started, and coloured—then her fingers still strolled over the keys like a breeze among flowers, calling forth sweet odours—or a child in a garden, culling a single leaf of different buds, and scattering them carelessly about; for she only played a strain here and there, nothing through.

"I hope Lady Dora is well?" asked Miles, gently, as he stood beside her.

"Quite so, I thank you," she coldly replied, bowing over her hands, which did not cease.

Though Miles had keenly felt, without expressing it to Minnie, her cousin's neglect, still he forbore speaking of it to her, lest it might aggravate her pain, he was so watchful over this darling wife of his; still he fancied some engagement, fashionable indolence, or absence from home, occasioned it; any thing but the truth—wilful slight. He was therefore not prepared for her reception of him; he stood a moment silent, looking down on the flying fingers, and many thoughts creeping over his

mind, scarcely leaving a trace, but faintly shadowing an idea, that this girl had loved him, her change of manner was so extraordinary since their parting in Italy. "I was not aware," he said at last, in commonplace phraseology, "that I should have the pleasure of meeting with your ladyship here." He was working with homely tools to get at a great truth—this girl's sentiments—they puzzled him; had she replied in a natural manner, he would have sought no farther, convinced that his impression had been erroneous. As it was, she answered with stern pride—

"It must be a matter of perfect indifference to Mr. Tremenhere;" and, ceasing her playing, she took her gloves, fan, and handkerchief from the piano, and without condescending to award him one look, walked majestically to the other end of the large room, and, seating herself on an ottoman by the fire, commenced conversing with the dowagers. Miles leaned an instant against the piano. A smile, half of contempt, and half triumph, played over his proud lip. Servants entered at that instant with lights. Quietly seating himself on the music-stool, he took up a book from a side table, and turned its leaves; but his thoughts flew off from pride and vexation to Minnie, his own quiet little cottage fireside, and that fairy wife, singing like a joyous bird, to soothe his weary spirit, when worn by a day's harassing. "Minnie—my own Minnie!" he whispered to his heart, and the dark flashing eyes of the previous moment, melted with the loving thoughts of her presence, and he forgot Lady Dora, all, save herself.

CHAPTER XIX.

With the lights a few stragglers came dropping in,—one of the first was Lady Lysson. This lady had much more of the foreigner than Englishwoman, in both mind and manner, having lived many years abroad, where in fact she had known Tremenhere, and was an ardent admirer of his genius. She had a hasty, but most graceful manner; youthfulness of movement, not at all unbecoming, though no longer young; at every step, every gesture, you involuntarily said to yourself, "What a very charming girl she must have been!" though really charming still, even at forty-five. Not the least attraction was a sweet, half-lisping, slightly foreign accent, perfectly natural; you felt that if she talked in her sleep, or walked, or laughed, she would do all just as in her waking moments. She now flitted into the room, and, spying a desolate-looking being on the music-stool, tripped towards it, and, half dazzled by the lights, shading her eyes with her hand, cried, "Who are you? what unfortunate Robinson Crusoe have we on this isle? what, Mr. Tremenhere! this is indeed an agreeable surprise; since when are you our guest?"

"Since the last three hours, Lady Lysson," he replied

cordially taking the proffered hand, and the heart was in the clasp, to thank the Samaritan who had not passed him by. Lady Dora coloured unseen, but it was shame; her own soul blushed for the weakness of its mould of clay, as she witnessed the generosity of another, and yet it was not all pride which dictated her conduct—an unknown, unacknowledged feeling prompted it.

"And you are going to remain with us a week—I mean, all the time *my* reign lasts here?" asked Lady Lysson, gliding to a sofa beside his stool. "There, sit down, Mr. Tremenhere, and let us have a little pleasant vision of bygone days in sweet Florence—and how goes on your painting? Are you very successful in town? You deserve to be so; and—and—by the way, some old friends of your's are staying here—have you seen them? Lady Ripley and her daughter. Is not that Lady Dora by the fire? Lady Dora, my dear," and she gracefully waved her little hand—raising her voice at the same time, "come here; here's an old friend of yours, whom you will be delighted to meet again. For shame—for shame!" she added, tapping his arm with her fan, "to bring our horrible English coldness into my nephew's house. I, who am trying to banish it for ever from our else unparalleled homes, and make all cordial in meeting—regretful in parting—and not afraid to express these feelings, as in the sweet South; and here I find one of my pet *protégés* crumbling my efforts to dust, and sitting cold and English on his stool of formality, at the extreme end of my own court, and kind friends in

the distance—for shame! Dear Lady Dora, help me to scold this refractory subject."

Lady Dora was compelled to obey the summons; to do otherwise, would be to betray herself. She rose; but the proud lip was compressed—the nostril dilated with annoyance. "I have spoken to Mr. Tremenhere," she said, in as indifferent a tone as she could command, and she seated herself on the sofa beside Lady Lysson. Tremenhere bowed—he could scarcely conceal a smile of satisfaction. Every triumph to himself, was one to his little wife—his ever present magnet. "I have had the pleasure of standing beside Lady Dora Vaughan's music-stool while she drew forth some of the sweet strains she so well commands at will," he said. Lady Dora fixed her haughty eyes upon him undauntedly, to read the epigram, if one were intended—but he looked upon her with a cordial, friendly smile. "He is no fool," she thought—"is he impervious to every attack? I *hate* this man," she could not think even; "I despise him."

"Then, you wretches!" continued Lady Lysson, "why did you not take some of the weight of a hostess' burthen off my shoulders, and enliven the dreadful half-hour before dinner with some music? Mr. Tremenhere, I command you to take me back to sweet Florence on one of those melodies none can sing like yourself."

There was an irresistible charm of nature about Lady Lysson, before which art, constraint, and mere worldly formality, fled abashed, and nature came forth from

every breast around her, to play with its fellow. Tremenhere threw off the cold, stern teaching of the world, and laughed and talked again, the happy Miles of his father's home. Even Lady Dora unbent, and condescended to ask him for one of the Tuscan airs he sang so well. Unhesitatingly he turned round the stool on which he sat, without rising, and running his hand over the keys, as one with old familiar friends, he commenced, not with stentorian lungs, but in tones scarcely to reach the fireside, so subdued they were, and yet certainly to touch the heart of all who could hear them. He had nearly concluded the second verse, when one of the ladies at the fire called Lady Lysson, to decide some disputed point of genealogical origin. "One instant—pray, don't cease!" she cried, rising to obey the summons. Lady Dora would have given worlds to accompany her, but it could not, with common politeness, have been accomplished; so she opened her fan, and, with eyes fixed on the group at the fire, sat perfectly indifferent, in seeming, to Miles and his *ariette*. The instant Lady Lysson rose, he, without even a pause, ran his fingers over the ivory, changed the key and air, having ceased singing in the middle of his verse; and, in a still lower tone, as if breathing to himself, but perfectly distinctly, commenced the hackneyed song of "My love and cottage near Rochelle." It was so pointedly done, so *internally* sung, (if we may so express it,) that she could not but feel to whom he addressed it, and her fair, neglected cousin Minnie stood, in her mind's eye, on the shore, watching the receding vessel.

"Mr. Tremenhere has a versatile taste," she said involuntarily.

"Pardon me!" he replied, starting as if from a dream, and dropping his hands from the instrument. "I was not aware Lady Dora was listening. 'Tis an old English song, speaking of home. We citizens of the world should forget such places, especially in society. The heart, however, turns there in thought, sometimes."

He fixed his eyes on her, with the stern look of one judging her severely. She dropped her's carelessly on the figures of her fan. He rose, and moved a step towards the other group. A sudden impulse impelled her to exclaim hastily, "Mr. Tremenhere!" He stopped, and coldly turned towards her—"Can I oblige your ladyship in any thing?"

"Mr. Tremenhere," she continued hastily, beneath her breath, while her bosom swelled with her self-imposed task; "pray, be seated an instant, I have a word to say to you."

He bowed, and placing himself on the music-stool, awaited her next words in cold silence. She leaned towards him; then glancing at the others present, whose number was momentarily increasing, she whispered, moving to give him place beside her, and pointing to it with her fan, "I wish to speak confidentially to you."

"Of yourself?" he asked, surprised, seating himself where she pointed.

"No," she replied, drawing herself up in offended pride; "I should not presume to trouble you with my personal affairs, Mr. Tremenhere."

"You cannot wonder," he rejoined, "at my feeling the utmost surprise how *mine* can in any way interest your ladyship."

"I would speak of my cousin," she faltered.

"Oh!" and he smiled; "true—of *my wife;* it will scarcely astonish you if I say, I had totally forgotten the relationship for the moment."

"Let there be a truce of sarcasms," she said, hurriedly. "You judge me harshly, I make no doubt; but there are many things which make this union a most unfortunate, much to be regretted one."

"Pardon me, Lady Dora Vaughan, not to those most interested. I can boldly assert *my* happiness is a realized dream of paradise: my only sorrow, is in absence from the home Minnie makes such to me; and I think I may venture to declare, that no sigh of regret ever quivers on her lip. Those she justly prized have not forgotten her—Aunt Dorcas, for one."

"Yes, I am aware," she interrupted, with some confusion, "she has visited you. Come Mr. Tremenhere," and she looked up less coldly in his face, "make some allowances for my position; I am not quite my own mistress. I——"

"Lady Dora, my father was an oldfashioned man, and he had quaint notions, you will say; he taught me that it was ungentlemanly not to reply to a polite letter in all cases, and ungenerous in many."

"I see," she said, haughtily, "I have a prejudiced judge. I will only pursue this conversation sufficiently to ask a personal favour."

"Name it. You shall, if possible, be obeyed."

"'Tis—'tis;—in fact, no one here, except my mother, is aware of your marriage. May I ask you to preserve it a secret?"

He read her thought, and was resolved to bend her false pride to bare itself before him. "I cannot see," he said, "in what my celibacy interests any one here. There is no lady in love with me, or sighing for leap-year to declare herself!" he laughed carelessly.

"Mr. Tremenhere," she cried, "my meaning is this: I—my mother, too, is most anxious that your union with Miss Dalzell should not be published. These painful family *secrets* are best preserved ever thus." The blood-red spot of pride mantled on her cheek, and flashed from her eye. He was speechless a moment; but what various passions passed over that face then, all settled in one—utter contempt. These two persons were the offspring of pride; but his proud spirit was the legitimate creation of a noble mind, unjustly spurned and contemned; hers, that foul-named thing whose father disowns it, whose mother blushes in shame as she looks upon it. Tremenhere rose in all his soul's dignity, and stood before her; her glance could not cross his—it shrunk, the unreal before the real.

"Lady Dora," he said, in his deep emphatic voice, "I have yet to learn in how much I, the *legitimate* son of Tremenhere of the manor, am beneath Miss Dalzell of Gatestone, or those whom she calls kindred. True, she is now but an artist's wife; but that artist will make his name one to be respected by all;—he is working for a

great end and purpose. Rely upon it, till that purpose be accomplished, his wife, the solace of all his best, happiest hours, will only keep her smiles to cheer his home, and support him in many trials; she will not, either from choice or necessity, lavish them on a cold, heartless society. *There,* his path of toil and bitterness, full often, shall be alone. As a flawless gem Minnie is to me; she needs no costly setting to prove her worth. It is not in a world like yours—like mine—she shall be named, to have one breath of slander dim her brightness now; but as surely as you and I stand face to face this day, so surely shall the day of her triumph come, and emanating from behind the cloud which now makes me so deep a shadow over your path." His face worked with the energy of his soul's anguish, at the thought even of his pure Minnie being dragged forth a target for the world's scorn, and for his sake, who would gladly shed his life's blood to save her one pang. He felt choking at the thought.

"So," he continued, with bitter irony, "you would have me as a tame lion in a cage, to caress through the bars in all security; but the moment it should dare dream of liberty, and, bursting its bonds, stand among you free, for every arm to be raised against it—every hand to hold a weapon to drive it back to slavery! I, Lady Dora, will be none such. I am proud as yourself—proud of my name, *even as it is;* and I will yet make it sound, with Fame's trumpet to herald it, unless the powers of hell combine against me, and *then* I will show Minnie to the world—not before!"

"Pardon me," she cried, looking very pale—her better genius had triumphed; "pray, pardon me, Mr. Tremenhere; I did not mean to pain you—I——" she was almost in tears.

"Lady Dora," he sternly said, "you and I understand each other. You have a noble heart; let not the blighting world profane it with its heartless wisdom. *Your* pride is the upas poison, withering all it touches; *mine* is spirit's right, riding on the winds which shall blast my enemies, and uproot them like trees in a whirlwind,—'tis the pride of love, too, which forbids my breathing the name of my beloved Minnie any where, until I can proclaim her with a voice no one can still, as Tremenhere's wife should be proclaimed! Rest satisfied," he contemptuously added; "your pride will not be shaken from its pedestal by the artist's wife!" He turned coldly away.

"Mr. Tremenhere—Miles Tremenhere!" she whispered anxiously, half rising; but he passed forward without hesitating, and joined the group at the fire.

"I saw you here discussing something with Lady Dora," cried the fair hostess; "was it music, painting, or—not love, I hope? 'Tis a subject best left unargued upon; it always reminds me of a game called 'cat's cradle,' which I played when a child with a cousin of my own, and through the loops of which, the fingers passed (for fingers, read arguments and reasonings, Mr. Tremenhere,) until at last he was certain to produce so incomprehensible a weaving of cord, that I could never unloose it,

and I was fain to sit down conquered. Don't play at 'cat's cradle' with Lady Dora."

"Your ladyship need be under no apprehension for the result, were I to attempt it. Lady Dora's cleverness would undo any skein of mine."

"I don't know that. Lady Dora, my dear; where is she? She has left the room."——

'Twas true; but she returned shortly with her mother, who received Miles with perfect good breeding as a mere acquaintance, which position he accepted, nor desired more.

CHAPTER XX.

This same evening two persons sat after dinner sipping their wine, in a hotel at the West End: these were Marmaduke Burton and Dalby. We must here introduce the latter as a totally different man to what we have seen him in Yorkshire; he was one of those who possess a serpent facility of slipping their skin, only that *he* performed the operation more than annually, and at will. He had crept into good society in town; there, where an honest, upright lawyer could not have met the views of his clients. Perhaps we are saying too much for some cases, for there were many men of the highest principle who employed Dalby; he was a very useful man, and being anxious to quit the country shortly, and practise in town, he lost no opportunity of increasing his connection. Here he was a perfectly different being; much of the formality of manner, necessary in the country, where levity might not have suited the homelier ideas of those seeking his aid, was thrown aside completely. He knew all the lessees, managers, English and foreign, of all the theatres, all the artists' studios, the actresses, models—all were familiar to him. Did Mr. —— want some fair one hastily summoned from Paris,

to appear unexpectedly on the boards of his theatre, and take the town by surprise, Dalby was off, with just a carpet-bag, to France, and before any one imagined it possible, he had returned with the fair one, as in nine cases out of ten he succeeded. There was a bustling manner about him, yet not disagreeable when he pleased, which carried much before him. He took things for granted, and often left no room for a person to say "No." Had he entreated, it might have been otherwise; but he said—"Oh! you must do it, you know, my dear—it will be the making of you;" and thus many a good engagement was relinquished for an indifferent one, by some inexperienced, and often established actress, because it suited Dalby's policy to oblige his employer. He cared for no one but himself. Then he had a habit of loitering near the doors of theatres, and many a lady, distressed by the non-appearance of her carriage, was politely addressed by Dalby. More than once he had unceremoniously, in such a case, appropriated a bachelor friend's brougham, and, offering it as his own, received ten thousand thanks from some fussy dowager on a wet evening, and a cordial invitation to her house. A half-crown to the groom, and a—"If asked whose brougham it is, say Mr. Dalby's," made him perfectly tranquil; to the real owner he would say, (be it remembered, he always took care to select some man of Lord Randolph's mould—a quiet, easy-going person—for his instrument to be played upon,) "My dear fellow, a very particular client of mine, rich as Crœsus, missed her carriage, I have lent yours for ten minutes—you don't mind?"

"Oh! not in the least; let's stand here, and watch the girls get into the carriages. By Jove! there's a pretty one, who can she be? Is it Lady This? or Miss That?" etc., etc., etc.

We give the reader a skeleton sketch of most conversations of the kind, just to show how Dalby had got on so well; and, by means such as these, he was factotum to half the needy of those kind of slaves in town, so no wonder he resolved to relinquish quiet country practice.

"Don't I tell you," said Burton, continuing a conversation, "that I had no idea the fellow was coming. Gray made his acquaintance in Florence, but I never imagined it would be continued in town; the fellow is making his way every where—curse him!" and he ground his teeth bitterly.

"We'll clip his wings," answered Dalby; "but it must be done through her—she is his guiding star in all. If he lost her—well; he would soon disappear from our path."

"I hate that man, Dalby, yet I would not seriously injure him; but why he, an artist, cannot return to Italy, seems astonishing to me—'tis his proper field."

"There are too many there; moreover, he has some scheme in hand I cannot fathom. I discovered Mary Burns. She is residing in a very humble cottage near Kentish Town; part of the house she lets furnished, and ekes out an existence for herself and blind mother, by morning lessons as governess. *He* has established her thus."

"And does—does"—he couldn't say Mrs. Tremenhere. "Does his wife ever call there?"

"I think so. I looked in at an hour when Mary was absent, having ascertained when this was the case. I called as a stranger about lessons for my daughter, and saw the old mother; but she is deaf, blind, and half childish. She gave me little information. All she said was, 'Kind friends—old friends, very kind; so Mary says.' I rely more on what I elicited, guardedly, from the servant. I think more may be done there. The girl has a downcast look and a fixed smile, which betoken one to be perhaps bought. Some of these blind fools to their interest, are faithful to their employers—what business has the hireling to look to any thing but money?"

"True—but don't trust her too soon."

"No, nor by myself. I will set another to work, who knows only what I tell him—one of the red waistcoat messengers. Tell him a woman's in the case, and he will be alert and faithful. This girl said, a sweet fair lady and tall gentleman called sometimes—these must be *the man* and his wife."

"Well, I leave it in your hands. Fancy my being obliged to leave Uplands! Fortunately, Gray, who is the most harum-scarum host in the world, let the name escape only the day he was expected. Of course, I could not stay and meet him; I told him we had had some discussion, and that the contact would be unpleasant to both. The fellow has *nouse* enough to keep a still tongue. No one seems acquainted with former facts; he is only known as a rising artist, of good fami-

ly, they think;—well, so he is on one side. I hinted no relationship, and begged Gray to insinuate *from himself*, to the dozen assembled there, that we had been on unfriendly terms, and thus prevent my name being mentioned."

"Oh! that was best; it may be as well he should hear little of you, if he could be persuaded somehow to take her there. Lady Dora might arrange that, if she so pleased——"

"My dear fellow, the oddest thing is, no one knows he is married! Lady Ripley drew me aside, and asked as a personal favour, that I would say nothing about the scandalous marriage of her niece—this before his coming was known; how they got on, all of them, I know not."

"Whew!" ejaculated Dalby, as if a thought struck him; "a bachelor, eh! Then what do they suppose *her* to be?"

"Her existence is unknown to his mere acquaintances, for I sifted Gray; he is like a sieve of wheat. I got all the corn, and threw the dust in his own eyes. My amount of information is this—This Miles is a capital fellow, not caring for any woman, else he were dangerous let loose amongst them; so deucedly good-looking, even Lady Dora might notice that; up to any thing—the best shot, horseman—all; so he's always welcome at Uplands—every fellow likes him."

"That is," said Burton, "as every man *likes* the best shot, etc., who cuts him out in all ways. So with these qualities, and the friends they create for a man, get to

work, Dalby, and let's hunt this impostor out of the country."

"We'll see," said the other, rubbing his hands. "I have an idea—crude, 'tis true; give me time. As your professional friend, I deem myself called upon to meet your natural wishes, and get rid of a nuisance. Poor fellow! we will award him Italy; why couldn't he go there?" and he laughed contemptuously.

These were the creatures Sylvia and Juvenal had selected for their niece! Poor Minnie! no wonder she ran away. Reader, did you ever feel a desire to be an atrocious villain for five minutes? To have all the sentiments, ideas, schemes, and infamies, engendered in the minds of such? Think how many thousand thoughts they have to which we are total strangers! What a peep into another world it would be—a world of novelties! Every spectre fancy, a mental Ethiop!

We must not make Dalby so black as Burton; the one looked upon the matter thus:—"Burton is my client; in my heart I believe Tremenhere legitimate; but we have no proof—'tis not for me to seek for it. In my client's interest I must try and get this fellow out of the country quietly; it can best be done by means of his wife—make him jealous, and he will carry her off to the antipodes. How may this be accomplished? I must devise some plan;" but in thus coldly calculating, he never once considered, that in raising a cause of jealousy in a man's mind, you destroy his happiness—you brush the bloom from the peach, and it quickly fades. A jealous man

desecrates every thing by his suspicions; turning the mysterious and beautiful vapour around her he loves, to mist and gloom. Is she sad?—she is regretting some one; gay?—some secret cause for joy exists; thoughtful?—'tis of another. He feels, in short, like a man tied to a galvanized corpse; the form is there—the spirit fled.

Burton's motives were different to the others. He had a darker aim in view; he had to be revenged on both—how? he cared little, so he accomplished it. He well knew that Miles had suffered deepest wrong at his hands, but who had the proof? not himself even. He had destroyed every trace which might lead to it; he had been resolved not to seek it, thus to be enabled to say to his accusing spirit, "'Tis false, I do not *know* it." How many like Burton trample awhile on conscience!

We have shown the position of Mary Burns. When Minnie had been a short time in town, she implored Miles to let her visit this poor girl; his natural goodness of heart had been a little warped by the world. He had become stern from the galling chain it threw around him, in the fault it accused his mother of; he judged woman harshly;—this, even now, made him frequently wish that Minnie had become his otherwise than by an elopement. At first, he peremptorily refused to permit her to go there. Minnie, in her soul's purity, looked amazed. "Why not?" she asked.

"Why?—why? oh, because it is not a fitting place for you to go to," was the reply.

"Why not, dear Miles?"

"Minnie, though you acted like an angel in visiting this poor girl in the country, and supporting her in her sorrow, by leading her aright; yet you must not forget that she has turned from the straight road—though you may pity, you must not associate with her."

She looked down silently some moments, then raising her full eyes to his face said, laying one fair hand on his shoulder, "Miles, dear, don't you believe Mary Burns to be a truly penitent woman?"

"Most truly and sincerely so."

"My dearest husband does not need me to recall to his mind our highest example of pardoning in a like case, I am sure? Do not be worldly and severe, my own love; think well, and from your own good heart, where would unhappy woman be if every door and heart closed against her?"

"My Minnie, my child, you are an angel!" he cried, clasping her to his bosom. "What should I be without you?—a cold, worldly wretch like those I associate with. I feared, darling, lest the censorious, ever hearing of it, should class your imprudence in flying with me with her deeper error. Forgive me, dearest, we will go and visit poor Mary; it will cheer her."

Our readers will see how the remembrance of his wife's fault ever haunted him; 'tis true, even in his fondest moments it would steal like a spectre across his mind. His adoration of her made this regret the more intense, and weakened the entire confidence he otherwise would have felt in her prudence — a thought beyond, never entered his imagination: but, strange though it be, such is man, naturally *a little* self-con-

ceited, and yet with all that, he cannot conceive that a woman may do for one from affection, what not all the world beside might win her to do for another! No, they cannot make this distinction; and thus Miles fancied Minnie too gentle, too little self-confident, to be perfectly relied upon, as he would have done on such a one as Lady Dora, or Minnie herself, had she suffered all sooner than have fled with him.

He was scarcely just; but this feeling was involuntary on his part, and, though happily unknown to her, was the thorn which rankled in his flesh. Together they visited Mary's neat little cottage, where a quiet, peaceful hope seemed to dwell; a faint blush rose to her pale cheek as they entered. She had been then living some few months respected by all, her fault unknown, and the meeting with Miles and his wife seemed like a momentary re-union with her error, and she blushed with shame and disgust towards herself. She had not forgotten her fault, nor the repentance due to it, but she had learned self-respect, and their presence for an instant degraded her again; but all was softened to peace in the kindness of both, and the deep interest evinced in her prosperity.

The first painful feeling passed, the interview was one of pleasure to all. Minnie had, even as a girl herself, upheld this sinking one; Miles had rescued her from shame, and placed her in comfort; and, as the girl looked from one to the other, her eyes swam in grateful tears. A lady and gentleman had been residing with her, and would return again shortly, meanwhile she hoped to let her rooms to others; then she had several pupils she

visited at their own homes, and her poor dear mother had now every comfort. These words she could scarcely utter for her swelling tears of gratitude. With light hearts Tremenhere and Minnie quitted, promising to return soon. As they turned away he grasped his little wife's hand and said, "Thank you, dearest, for the happiness of to-day; when can I ever pay you my debt for all, my Minnie?"

CHAPTER XXI.

This chapter of digression was necessary, to show our readers the exact position of all our various personages. We will now return to Miles at Uplands; only, however, to state, that after another day passed there, in necessary arrangements with the lordly master, he returned to town, to the great dissatisfaction of this latter and Lady Lysson, with whom he was a great favourite; but, beyond necessity, he never now associated with those where Minnie was a stranger. He avoided the slightest collision with Lady Dora, whose pride once more rose in the ascendant, as she beheld his evident avoidance of her. He was strictly polite; but no mortal could, from the manner of either, have imagined that they had *nearly* loved once, or that still Lady Dora remembered that feeling, though in anger towards her own weakness—still less could the world have supposed that he had married her favourite cousin —almost sister! These are the secrets of life, hidden from a prying world, and festering often from their bitterness in one's own heart.

He left Uplands, and was once more beside his loving wife, whose every thought had been his in absence. She

was the model of what a wife should be, when left alone. She did not, like too many, cry, "I am free awhile; what shall I do, that I cannot when he is here?" Her thought was, "What shall I do to please Miles when he returns —how surprise him?" and the busy anxious heart sought through all its recesses to find one, if possible, where a warmer thought might be hidden, than any he had yet known, to welcome him with on his return.

Men of intrigue have emissaries every where; they are never above a little familiarity with servants of every description. These are their best friends; for the ones money cannot purchase, may always be bought by affability and kindness, and this without compromising one's self. Dalby seldom was guilty of so unwary an act as this, except in extreme cases. He found out all he wished to know adroitly; even the *purchased* were unaware they were selling secrets. It was through some channel of this sort he discovered how soon Tremenhere left Uplands, and the same day at dinner he was there.

Lady Lysson did not like the man, but her nephew assured her he was a capital fellow; above all, extremely useful; so she received him, and attributed her personal antipathy to some flaw in her organ for comprehending exactly what a capital fellow should be. Lady Dora and her mother were beyond measure vexed. This former was hourly receiving warnings enough, in an indirect way, to cure her of her false pride, only they had not the effect of doing so; she did not yet see her fault. To make a confidant of this man, neither dreamed of; and they came down to dinner with the pleasant anticipation of

hearing a dozen persons wondering about Tremenhere's marriage, and of hearing all particulars discussed and commented upon. They had decided upon braving the storm by quietly disclaiming any acquaintanceship with his wife; and on that very morning Lady Dora, under a better feeling than of late, had been asking her mother to allow her to visit poor Minnie, when they returned to town, but ineffectually. "We are forced to meet the *man* occasionally," said Lady Ripley, coldly, "but visiting one who has so disgraced her family, is quite another thing!"

Great was their surprise when Dalby bowed most respectfully, but distantly to them, merely inquiring about their health. Still greater was it, when, Lady Lysson speaking with regret of Tremenhere's absence, the politic Dalby alluded to him as scarcely one with whose name he was acquainted! They both mentally thanked him, and dinner passed off delightfully.

Lady Dora was not the affianced bride of Lord Randolph—true, he wished her to be his—so did Lady Lysson—so did Lady Ripley; but three affirmatives in this case, were conquered by one negative. Lady Dora said, when he proposed to her, "We do not know one another sufficiently yet;" and he was quite content to wait. Her beauty, position—all made him desire to make her his wife; but in truth she was not a person to inspire mad love in any one, except indeed, her despotic pride could bend, and the woman be all woman; but as it was he took it very calmly—she would be his some day, he presumed. But his love

was not that St. Vitus' genus which makes a man ever restless—hot and cold all over, if another does but look at your love; or, like that deep-seated affection which bound Lady Lysson at sixteen to her "cat's cradle" cousin; and though a young lovely widow at twenty, deaf to every second offer, not seeing the *possibility* of calling another—husband. Neither of these loves swayed Lord Randolph; it was a connubial and well-disposed affection, which pulls its Templar nightcap well over its ears, and falls asleep, perfectly assured of awaking as soon as ever it shall be called upon to do so.

The cloth is gone—the ladies are gone, and the gentlemen sit alone—a cosey half-dozen.

"So," said Dalby, at last, "I find Tremenhere, the artist, has been here; did he make a long stay?"

"No," answered somebody, "only a day; we were sorry he quitted so soon. What a deuced pleasant, intelligent fellow he is!"

"I think him very *hawnsome*," drawled a greyish-looking youth, like a raw March morning.

"By jingo, yes!" chimed a third; "if I were a woman, he is just the man I'd fall over head and ears in love with."

"Now, I don't think that," said the raw one, "he's too cold; and I don't quite like his long moustache."

"Well," retracted the second speaker, "perhaps I said too much; he certainly is well-looking, but he wants style; and somehow the ladies don't seem to admire him—they are the best judges."

"I tell you what," exclaimed Lord Randolph; "I

think him one of the most distinguished-looking fellows I ever saw, and, were I in the service, would give half my pay for his moustache; why, 'tis the most perfect raven's wing I ever saw, and silky like his hair. My only surprise *is*, that one has never heard of any love affair of his; and here, as in Florence, he always moves in the best society."

"Who is he?" asked an elderly epicure, waking up from a dream "in memoriam" of the exquisite dinner his host had set before them.

"Oh! a—nobody, I believe," answered some one. "A decent family, I have heard, in the country; but then he is very unpresuming—that's one thing."

"Faith!" answered Lord Randolph, "he was sought after, courted, by every one in Florence; but the fellow seemed to me to dislike society, like one absorbed either by his art, or some secret preying thoughts."

"Perhaps he was a *government spy*," drawled the one before alluded to.

All this while Dalby had sat listening and smiling to himself; just what he wanted. Lord Randolph at last noticed this, and exclaimed, "Dalby—you who know every thing, I bet my life, know more than any of us about Tremenhere."

"How should I?" he answered evasively, to excite more curiosity on his host's part. "By the way, has he finished your 'Aurora' yet?" He wished them to think he was anxious to turn the subject.

"No," replied Lord Randolph. "He says he cannot meet with a face to please him for the goddess."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dalby, as if involuntarily. "That's too good a joke!"

"By Jove! you know something more than you tell us, Dalby. Come, man, have it out; make a clean breast of it."

"Pshaw, I know nothing! I only laughed at the idea of not finding a lovely Aurorean face, even in London."

"Come, that won't do," cried two or three; "you *do* know something—let's have it."

Dalby thought a moment. To tell all these men would not do; he had gained his point, in exciting Lord Randolph's curiosity. His very hesitation said more than words. Finding himself rigorously attacked, he affected to have done this to raise a storm of curiosity in their minds; and, in the midst of their clamour, he quickly turned his eye on his host, and, giving him a peculiar look of intelligence, said, "I assure you, I know only this, that were I an engaged man, I should very much hesitate in trusting my 'ladye-love' so near so fascinating a man."

Lord Randolph gave a start; even little used as he was to solve enigmas, he saw something was meant, and the look convinced him, for himself alone. By a little *finesse* he silenced the clamorous, and turned their thoughts into another channel, and thus the after dinner passed.

"Come, now," said Lord Randolph, as he and Dalby sat together in the former's dressing-room, smoking a cigar, after every one else had retired for the night, "tell me what you meant after dinner, about Tremen-

here. I confess that man, at home and abroad, has sorely puzzled me."

Dalby had well digested his plans, to obtain the concurrence in them which he eventually hoped for from the other, it was necessary that he should excite a feeling of pique against Miles; thus he went to his worthy work, first having bound his listener to solemn secresy, on the plea of personal interest in himself, making him guilty of an unprofessional want of silence and caution; this obtained, he began—"You know, perhaps, that Tremenhere is illegitimate?"

"Not I—how the deuce should I?"

"Well, then, he is. I should be unnecessarily exposing many painful family secrets, to tell you what family he lays claim to kindred with; I merely come to facts, which are true. He has been residing abroad some years—by the way," he seemed as if suddenly enlightened by a thought, though every word had been pre-conceived, "did he not meet Lady Dora Vaughan in Florence?"

"Yes; when I too met him," answered the other, not a little amazed at this turn.

"That, then, accounts for much."

"What *can* you mean, Dalby—pray, be quick?" actually Lord Randolph's heart gave a little quiet jump.

"Well then, in a few words, Lady Dora was recently in Yorkshire, and there too Tremenhere was."

"This has never been alluded to in my presence," said the listener, uncomfortably.

"Nor to one another, *perhaps*," emphasized Dalby. "I think there is a coolness between them *now*."

"By Jove! I said as much to Lady Dora, and she denied it rather angrily and haughtily."

The other smiled. "It was not so in Yorkshire. Her ladyship was as usual kind, affable, and condescending, and this Tremenhere (mind I am speaking my mind in all candour to your lordship) mistook it, I fear, and acting thereupon, from what transpired, was rather presuming."

"How? in what manner?" asked Lord Randolph with *hauteur*. "And how did this occur? were they domiciled in one house?"

"No, this made the matter more audacious, he had been driven from this house, and used to enter surreptitiously through the grounds, and intrude upon Lady Dora's privacy."

"By George!" cried Lord Randolph, passing his hand through his hair, (like a bird trying to smooth its ruffled feathers,) as if it stood on end with horrified pride; "this comes of mixing in general society, as they do abroad. I set my face against it then, but Lady Lysson liked it, so I gave in; people should keep in their own class."

"There certainly are some confoundedly presuming persons," chimed in Dalby, not at all offended at what might have touched his sensitiveness, had he possessed such a thing; but he was, grammatically speaking, "an impersonal," taking nothing to himself. He made a pause here, wishing the other to commence the next facet in the diamond he was cutting, reserving to his own skill to polish each, according to the light required

for his scheme; it would be a precious gem worth setting when he had completed it.

"Lady Ripley and her daughter were staying at the former's brother's, were they not? I have heard them speak of a homely Yorkshire family of relatives, not known beyond their own grounds."

"The same," answered Dalby, well pleased at the other's ignorance of the Formby family—it furthered his plans.

"And how did terminate?"

"Oh! of course, as you may imagine; Tremenhere was expelled in a summary manner, as her ladyship complained of the annoyance, and now I come to the pith of my tale." Lord Randolph blew forth a long puff of smoke, and drew nearer the fire; he was positively excited. "Remember," said the other in a whisper, "I have your lordship's word that this shall be a profound secret between us, happen what may."

"I pledge you my sacred honour."

"I will not mention names, but facts; this Tremenhere, under a quiet exterior, is a libertine,—one who knows no such thing as honour by practice, though it is a favourite theme of his. Enraged, I presume, by Lady Dora's just repulsion of his impertinence, he carried off a most lovely girl from the neighbourhood, to the distraction of her family, and this girl is now residing with him near Chiswick."

"By heavens!" exclaimed the other, "how one may be deceived! Had this girl no brother?"

"None; those kind of men know where they can in

security work their villanies, and when this man complained to you that he could meet with no face worthy of his Aurora, I involuntarily thought of this girl, for she is the perfection of beauty in fairness."

"You know her?"

"I have seen her often; pardon my concealing her name, for the sake of her family."

"Egad, Dalby, I should like to see this girl! I worship beauty; the fellow deserves it at my hands for his impertinence to Lady Dora."

Dalby had exactly cut his diamond as he had desired to do. "Should you?" he said thoughtfully; "I will think how it may be done, but he is deucedly jealous often."

"Are they married?" asked Lord Randolph.

"I have *heard* so, but we hear many things which are untrue." It would not have done to have said, Yes—for, though a fool, Lord Randolph was not devoid of principle.

"He is too jealous, at all events," continued the other, "to make her 'An Aurora' for others to gaze upon."

"Is she then so beautiful?" asked his host eagerly.

"I tell you this, my lord," was the emphatic reply. "I have seen much beauty, many portraits—I cannot in honest truth except *even* Lady Dora—I never saw *any one* to equal Mrs. Tremenhere, as they call her."

"*By* George!" exclaimed his lordship, throwing his cigar in the fire—the words and action, spoke volumes of emotion, for him.

Dalby saw his scheme had taken root; curiosity leads

to more real mischief than many another actual vice—he rose.

"Don't go yet; here, smoke another cigar before you go: it is early—not twelve."

"My dear lord, I was up early; we hard-working men are unused to these late hours of luxury. I am dead beat to-night," and he yawned convulsively, for no sleep was near his brain; it was waking, and watching every thing. He had done enough for one night; he would leave his lordship food for reflection. He had several aims in view—to revenge himself on Minnie, was one; but to serve Marmaduke, by driving Tremenhere out of England, was the principal object, thus securing a safe friend and patron to himself. This too, he did, with Lord Randolph, who saw nothing of the wickedness of the plot or plotters. He was ready to run into any mischief, for no particular motive, only from sheer idleness; and he was in good hands to lead him astray. With Tremenhere, he felt quite indignant; and firmly resolved, as soon as practicable, to cut the fellow. He had ordered this "Aurora;" so he must take it. Meanwhile, he would be very cool when they met, and let him comprehend that any attention he had received had been condescension, not equality.

CHAPTER XXII.

Two days after these events, the lady portion of visiters quitted Uplands—some went one way, some another. Lady Lysson's chaperonage was over, so she, too, quitted her bachelor nephew's, and left him to his male companions, dogs and horses, for a while longer. Dalby remained, and a worse than himself returned—Marmaduke Burton; worse too, that he was more on an equality with their host than Dalby. He could work openly; yet, too, the coward trembled lest Tremenhere should ever discover his share in the nefarious plot—which plot we shall now permit to work itself out, without further explanation.

Lady Dora's better genius triumphed when she quitted Uplands. Something remained painfully on her mind after her conversation with Miles. His indignant pride debased her to her true littleness of conduct, and the really good-nature, had it not been biased by a worldly mother, triumphed; and one day her quiet, well-appointed brougham, which she chose in preference to their britscha, as being less ostentatious, and in better taste for her expedition, drove up to Tremenhere's pretty cottage at Chiswick. Minnie was alone; he had gone to town on business.

She, all affection and forgiveness, had a singular memory in these times of heartlessness and calculation; she always forgot the bad, and held a bright sunny spot for the good deeds of all. In an instant she was in Dora's arms, her own round the other's neck, and her bright face, dimpling like a child's, and as innocent, held upwards for the kiss of peace.

"Dear, dear, Dora!" she cried, while on the setting of fringe which we have spoken of round her soft eyes, hung gems of tears, like May morning dew on hawthorn, "I knew you would come some day and see me." Here the joyous tears burst forth. "And Miles thinks so too, I know; for, whenever he returns, he always asks has any one called? well knowing no one would so, unless it were you; and when I say, 'No one, dear,' he takes me to his arms, and says, embracing me, 'Never mind, Minnie, I always come back to you—never mind the world, dear child!' Oh! he is *so* kind, dearest Dora!" exclaimed the loving wife, "and I am so *very* happy!"

"Long may it last, dear Minnie," said her cousin, as she returned the caress; "I have been very cruel not to come sooner, but—but——"

"Don't speak of it, dear Dora," cried Minnie, ever anxious to save another any pain; "I know it was not your fault—my aunt wouldn't let you; but, now you are here, *do* stay all day, Miles will return at five, 'tis scarcely two yet," and she drew her beside her on an ottoman, and encircled her with her arms.

"I cannot Minnie, mamma does not know I have come; I shall have to tell her cautiously, for——"

"Oh! I know, I know, I've been a very naughty girl, but why did they lock me up? and why was my uncle going to take me to that odious Miss Burton's? If he had confided in my honour, I *never* should have ran away."

"Are you sure, Minnie—quite sure? Mr. Tremenhere is very persuasive, I make no doubt, and handsome too; I think him much improved since his marriage," she spoke constrainedly.

"How do you know?" asked her cousin, amazed; "when did you see him—and where?"

"Did he not tell you," inquired the other, much confused, "I met him at Uplands. Oh! I have perhaps done wrong in telling you." A strange sensation, half triumph, half pleasure, shot through her heart; it was one of those involuntary promptings of the evil one, which we cannot always master. "Why," prompted this fiend, "did Tremenhere deceive his wife? Dares he not trust himself to name me?"

"Oh! I see it all!" cried that pure-hearted wife; "it is just like my own dear Miles—he feared to pain me." She was sincere in this thought *then*.

"Come, Minnie," cried Lady Dora, hastily rising, "put on your bonnet, we will have a quiet drive, we can then speak of all; I love a nice chat in a cosy, half-sleepy, jog-trot pace—my country pace, I call it. Come, we will go out for half an hour." She wished to break the

thread of the conversation, and have a little time to recover herself.

"And then you will return with me, and remain?"

"I don't promise; we shall see."

The delighted Minnie was soon shawled and bonneted. It was a fine, clear day, almost frosty; they drove on till they arrived at Kenington Gardens; Minnie had told all, her flight, how accomplished—of her happiness she needed not to speak; it breathed in every glance, every tone, when his name fell from her lips. Dora more than once checked a sigh—this might have been hers but for her pride; the soul whispered this, the woman disavowed the thought; yet she had never loved him, or she would have sacrificed all, and even then have sighed over the poverty of the all she had to give. To check these thoughts, she drew the check-string at Kensington Gardens.

"Let us have a walk, Minnie," she cried suddenly; "the air is refreshing."

In an instant they were side by side, walking at a brisk pace through the walks. Lady Dora turned off towards the Palace, to avoid any rencontres. We often turn to avoid meeting something which is following us.

By chance, it so happened that Lord Randolph was riding down the road; he recognized Lady Dora's brougham, inquired, and in less than five minutes overtook her and her companion. What was to be done? Lady Dora was scarlet; nothing could more have annoyed her than this. Introduce her cousin she could not, as Mrs. Tremenhere; it would betray all.

Had she had time to think, it would have been infinitely better to have said nothing than what she said. Pressing Minnie's arm, who, poor child, thought all Dora did must be right, she said, "Miss Dalzell, Lord Randolph Gray." Nevertheless, Minnie did start, and visibly; then a deep flush rose, and added still more to her extreme beauty. He was perfectly paralyzed. In overtaking Lady Dora, he expected in her companion to see some familiar face. Here he met a person whose name even was unknown to him; her confusion did not escape him either. Had they met before? Was she an humble companion? But, no: he assuredly must have then seen her before. And, to confirm him in the certainty of this not being the case, this fair girl called the proud daughter of Lady Ripley "Dora," and "dear Dora." She stood far below this latter in stature, though above middle height; but there was a fairy grace, lightness, and exquisite beauty about her, even his far-travelled eye had never before seen equalled; and when she smiled, or laughed with her light, joyous, modulated laugh, the face lit up so strangely bright, that she looked like some inspired spirit.

When a man or woman tries to be pleasant, he or she generally, not *always*, is constrained, and seen to disadvantage. What with her beauty, the surprise of the meeting, and curiosity about her, Lord Randolph, never too brilliant, became downright enigmatical in speech, which, together with her embarrassment, so annoyed Lady Dora, that, hastily turning, she said—

"It is later than I imagined; let us return."

"Return!" thought he; "but whither? I would give worlds to know. Oh! I shall find out; doubtless she will often accompany Lady Dora; 'tis some young friend, not 'out' yet. Shall I escort you?" he asked, after handing them to the brougham.

"'Tis useless—I thank you," answered Lady Dora, coldly; "we have a call to make." He bowed, and they drove off. He sat round on his horse, watching them out of sight; politeness forbade his following. It was an immense relief to his half-affianced wife when they drove off; every instant she had dreaded to hear Minnie talk of Miles: he was ever on her lip. But though much pained and astonished at first at the untruth Dora had told; afterwards, though still reprehending it, she felt assured her cousin had done it for some good motive, so she held her tongue about her husband. Miss Dalzell could not acknowledge one.

"I thought it better to say you were a Miss Dalzell," said Lady Dora; "men are so inquisitive. Who would have dreamed of meeting Lord Randolph in Kensington Gardens? It was a fatality; I thought him still at Uplands."

"He said he was only in town for a day," suggested her cousin.

"So much the better; he will forget all about you, and no one will know you by that name, unless indeed——" She paused, looking greatly annoyed, as Dalby and Marmaduke Burton crossed her mind. Minnie questioned her; but turning the subject, they conversed about something else until they reached

home. Lady Dora had taken the precaution of ascertaining whether they were followed. Minnie could not prevail upon her to remain; she left her compliments for Tremenhere, and promised her delighted cousin to return again soon. Lord Randolph had been found on that road not without motive; he was going to Tremenhere's cottage on an excuse, intending to see the reputed beauty, if possible. After the meeting with Minnie, he changed his mind: "I will not go to-day," he thought; "I shall be disgusted with any woman I could possibly see, after this beautiful girl. I must find out who she is; she realized all one's ideas of a fairy." Thus thinking, he turned his horse homewards.

When Tremenhere returned to his cottage, he was assailed by a variety of feelings on hearing the events which had occurred during his absence. Of Lady Dora's coming, he was pleased; it gratified Minnie, but he would rather it had been done with her mother's cognizance, and in her company. There was something galling in this secret visit, but he forbore to say so to his little wife, she looked so joyous and happy; not one word of annoyance that her cousin had so long deferred it, not a harsh thought for even her aunt. All was forgiveness and sunshine in her sweet face.

"Verily, Minnie," said her enraptured husband, bending his fine eyes in fondest love upon her, "you are not fit for this cold world; you must live on a sunbeam, dearest, and be enwrapped at eve in the gorgeous clouds fringed with gold, in which the day-god sinks to rest."

"No, Miles," she answered laughing, her whole bright

soul in his face, robed in smiles and dimples; "*you* shall be the day-god, rising at peep of day, higher and higher until you arrive at meridian splendour, and *then* I will be the dial to mark your course, and live in your rays."

"I will accept that position, darling, for then I shall know you only live by my light. Minnie, Minnie, it would kill me to think any one even approached your heart, where I must reign alone!"

"How could that ever be possible?" she said, fondling his hand in both her own, and then kissing it almost with reverence.

"Now, tell me all about your drive," he inquired after a pause. Minnie had reserved this for the last; somehow her woman's unerring wit told even her unsophisticated nature, that it would pain Miles, and it grieved her so much to see a cloud on his brow. Even with this foresight, she was ill prepared for the annoyance which assailed him; he was most indignant at Lady Dora's introducing Minnie as Miss Dalzell. "In your position," he cried, "she should have been doubly guarded; better not have named you at all, and to Lord Randolph Gray, of all persons, I am sorely perplexed how to act."

She tried as much as possible to soothe him, but there was a sting in his heart—a sting of anticipated trouble arising out of this. He knew Lord Randolph so well, that he felt convinced he would seek every possible means of discovering who Minnie was: she was not a creature to be passed in a crowd—her beauty was too rare and remarkable. He thought at first of seeking him, and confiding the truth to him and his honour for

secresy. Well would it have been had he done so; this would have shown the affair, when well explained, in a different light to the one in which the other now viewed it. Had he known Marmaduke Burton and Dalby were guests at Uplands, he would not have hesitated; but in ignorance of much, he at last grew calmer under the erroneous idea that perhaps Lord Randolph would think no more about her; besides, how could he trace her—how hear any thing of her? And, to crown all, he knew the other was leaving England on a tour in a month; so he resolved to let matters take their natural course, and, comforted by Minnie's assurance that his Lordship had not followed them, he dropped the subject, on her promising to go out no more with Lady Dora, at present.

Poor Tremenhere little imagined how much Lord Randolph really thought of Minnie; that evening he called at Lady Ripley's, and to his surprise was requested to enter a boudoir solely belonging to Lady Dora, where even he had seldom been admitted. He found her sitting alone, evidently awaiting his arrival.

"Lord Randolph," she said with more cordiality than was usual on her part, "I have a favour to solicit at your hands."

"At mine?" he said, gallantly kissing the fair one she extended towards him. "Thus let me thank the lovely messenger pleading to its companions. I shall indeed esteem myself happy in obliging you in any way."

"Thank you. Will you then do so by not naming to my mother, or indeed any one, our rencounter to-day? I mean so far as regards Miss——"

"Miss Dalzell?" he interrupted her in increased surprise.

"I see you have a retentive memory," she answered, with slight annoyance. She had hesitated at the name, hoping he might have forgotten it. "The fact is, for the present, I do not wish even my mother to know that I have seen Miss Dalzell."

"Is the fair lady some fairy, destined to take the whole world by surprise, in an unexpected, unannounced *début* shortly?" he asked.

"Decidedly not," she replied, vexed at the evident interest he displayed; not from jealousy of the man, but fear, lest this interest might lead to research. "Miss Dalzell," she continued, "will be shortly leaving town for the Continent with her—friends."

"Indeed! 'tis a pity; she would have been a constellation of the highest order in our spherical circle, where so few beauties are seen, next season."

"She seems to have captivated you, Lord Randolph."

"Captivated! no, my heart is not free," and he bowed conventionally to the fair speaker; "but I thought her of rare beauty. By Heavens!" he exclaimed, as a sudden idea struck him, "that dilatory fellow, Tremenhere, complains that he cannot meet with a model for his 'Aurora'—I wish he could see Miss Dalzell! I wonder whether she would sit to him? Pray, ask her, dear Lady Dora: does she live in town? I'll speak to Tremenhere about it." He was forgetting every thing she had been asking him. Lady Dora felt dreadfully embarrassed—her colour rose.

"Pray," she cried, "my lord, do not do a thing which would pain and annoy me excessively. I have requested you to forget all about Miss Dalzell, and you talk of her sitting for some foolish picture, and of all men on earth to Mr. Tremenhere."

Her last words awoke other thoughts in his mind. "I am very forgetful," he answered. "Rest assured, Lady Dora, no one shall hear her name or the meeting from me; but may I in return ask, why less to Mr. Tremenhere than any other person?"

"Oh!" she answered, evasively, "artists will dare any thing for a face which exactly meets their wants and wishes. I *particularly* desire all which passed to-day, forgotten by you."

"You shall be obeyed."

"Some day possibly, you may know all; 'tis now a most painful mystery."

"You may rely upon me," he replied. "And now, may I ask, as one *much* interested in you, Lady Dora, have you not recently met Mr. Tremenhere in the country? I do not mean at Uplands—in Yorkshire?"

In an instant her face became extremely pale, even to the lips, which quivered; then indignant pride at his questioning drove back the blood in flushing bounds. "Pardon me, my lord, I do not see the right you have to question. I was in Yorkshire with my mother."

"I too crave pardon," he replied, "for presuming too much on hopes for the future. I see you did meet him; the rest is no stranger to my knowledge—I am satisfied."

There was a calm dignity about him which she had never before seen. She would have given worlds to know what he alluded to—what he had heard. But she durst not do so, even *her* pride scarcely restrained her from questioning; her mind was in a complete maze of fears. What could he mean? Individually, his opinion was of not the slightest importance to her, but, as transmitted perhaps by him to the world, it was altogether different; yet what could she say? Already she felt humbled at having been forced to ask so great a favour as silence from him; what was still more remarkable in this interview was, that he made no attempt whatever, beyond the most commonplace gallantry, to hint at his own suit, he seemed absorbed in other thoughts, and these were occasioned by her painful confusion at the mention of Tremenhere's name; and a bitter feeling in consequence arose in his mind against him, for his supposed impertinent presumption. There was a silence of a few minutes, broken at last by her coldly saying, "I believe we may now abridge this meeting, Lord Randolph—I have your promise of silence. You proposed visiting my mother, I think? Allow me to have you announced. I will rejoin you in the drawing-room shortly." So saying, she rang the bell.

"You may rely upon my discretion," he said, partially recovering himself. "And we will leave all to old Time, he unravels wonders and mysteries; you will not deprive me a long time of the pleasure of your society?"

She merely bowed, and smiled constrainedly as the servant followed him to the drawing-room, and an-

nounced him to Lady Ripley, who little imagined all the events of that day.

Man is a changeable, versatile animal, ever forgetful of the old for the new, more perfectly comprehending the fable of "sour grapes," than any other.

"I dare say," said Lord Randolph to himself next day, "that this very mysterious Miss Dalzell would not have proved half so pretty on second sight; there must be something strange about her, or why this mystery? There are days our eyes create beauty every where—yesterday was doubtless one of these; were she really so lovely, and a friend of Lady Dora's, some one must have seen and spoken of her, whereas I never heard the name even in my life until yesterday. That fellow Tremenhere," he continued after a thoughtful pause, "I should like to be revenged on his insolence; it wont do to cut him without an excuse, he has given me none, and he is a favourite in many circles where these artists hold a certain sway. I always thought it bad taste to give them too much liberty, and the event proves my just judgment." It will be seen that Lord Randolph was rather *arrière* in the more genial liberality of opinion, generally prevalent. He was of the Lady Dora school, which fosters absurd prejudices and deformities of mind, in the shape of circumscribing and false pride, reminding one of a village, somewhere in the Landes, whose inhabitants are all from birth afflicted with goîtres, which hideous swelling of the throat becomes from habit a beauty in their eyes; so much so, that 'tis told of them, that one day a healthy person appearing

among them in church, their minister bade them thank God they were as they were, and not like that afflicted creature before them!

Lord Randolph's pride was in arms against the painter fellow, who had dared raise a thought, as he imagined, towards Lady Dora; it was not from any excessive love for her, but adherence to *caste*. In her confusion, though it puzzled him at first, he finally thought he read only indignation, and he awarded to himself the right, to lower his presumption in some way. What fools we are to undertake perilous journeys in the dark!

The new idea banished the old: he almost forgot Miss Dalzell, and resolved to go whither he had been going yesterday, as he mounted his horse next morning—a fashionable morning—about two o'clock; so he turned his horse's head towards Chiswick, where he knew Tremenhere resided. He had never had occasion to call there before, having always met him either at his club, in society, or his own (Lord Randolph's) house. He was not quite certain of the cottage, but he inquired, and at last a pretty little villa was pointed out to him as the one he sought.

"I think the gentleman is not at home," said his informant, who looked like a tradesman; "for I know him well, and I saw him walking towards town an hour ago."

This suited the other's views exactly; so, leaving his horse in charge of a man who was loitering about, he walked quietly up to the cottage. The front gate stood

open; he walked through a prettily arranged garden, filled with autumnal flowers, to the hall door, and rapped gently. He came, like a good general, to surprise, not storm the capital. A neat-looking girl answered the door. "Is Mr. Tremenhere at home?" inquired the visiter.

"No, sir," was the reply. "He will not return till this evening."

"Very provoking!" exclaimed he; "I am leaving town, and wished particularly to leave a message, or see him."

The girl made no reply; she was not evidently accustomed to see many visiters there.

"Could I see any one to leave it with, or write a note?" he asked.

"If you would please to step in, sir; I dare say you can write to master," she said, drawing back. Lord Randolph wanted no further invitation. In an instant he was following the girl down the passage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The girl threw open a door, and he entered; his heart was not quite free from pulsation. He was not a man of adventure by nature—two or three motives urged him to this one. The room was quietly, but *gracefully* furnished; the curtains were not of rich damask, neither were there rich bronzes, *ormolu*, or tables to break one's neck over, or shiver to atoms in the fall thereof half a dozen hideous idols, or Chinese cups and saucers—no! it was not a company receiving-room, but the apartment of a refined and domestic mind. The two generally unite, for they emanate from our best mistress—Nature. The curtains and furniture were of pale green chintz. There were a few choice flowers in a vase on the table; one single dahlia, rich in colour, alone, like a queen in state and beauty, in a rich Bohemian glass, on a centre table; and, like attendant courtiers, in various smaller ones, were varied specimens scattered about amidst books, pencils, half-finished bouquets, shewing why they were there—for art to perpetuate nature. There were ottomans, easy-chairs, and ladies' work; in short, home spoke to you in every thing. There was an open piano, and music scattered about; and the tables, piano, even

to the frames of the mirrors, were of maple-wood. Another door opened into a small conservatory with stained glass windows—it was, in truth, a little paradise. A cheering fire enlivened the whole—for though a fine day, it was chilly; yet the sun shone without, and in the bright conservatory, where summer seemed still to reign. "You can write a note here, sir, if you please," said the woman, placing materials before him; "and when you have finished it, if you will be good enough to ring the bell, I will return." Thus saying, and not having a fear of those adventurous knights called London thieves before her eyes, she withdrew quietly. Every thing there breathed peace, even the placid servant.

"What shall I write?" thought Lord Randolph. "What a fool I was, not to ask to see the mistress of the house! it is not too late; by George, I'll do so now!" He rose to touch the bell, a voice arrested his hand; it was breathless, as if the owner had hurried; it came through the conservatory, and a step, like a bounding roe, accompanied it. "Miles, dear!" it cried, "have you forgotten any thing? I heard your rap. I was at the end of the garden gathering violets,"—the step stopped suddenly, "Oh, dear!" exclaimed the voice changing its tone, "I declare I've lost them all out of my basket, hurrying to meet you! Come, and help me pick them up!" There was an instant's silence, the visiter stood irresolute, his eyes fixed on the conservatory door. "Miles!" called the voice again; there was no reply, and in another instant Minnie, with eyes full of hope and surprise, entered the room. A scream burst from her lips, and

her basket fell from her hands. Lord Randolph stood a moment speechless. "Miss Dalzell!" he exclaimed at last, advancing like one treading on fairy-land, so amazed he felt. Minnie was like a rose when she entered, and her eyes looked almost black in their violet darkness from exercise and excitement. Now she became pale and trembling, why, she scarcely knew, 'twas perhaps presentiment. "Lord Randolph Gray!" she ejaculated, "*you* here!"—the very words implied deep fear of consequences.

"I certainly did not anticipate the happiness of meeting one so soon again, whose memory has lived with me unfading since yesterday," he answered with the ready gallantry of a man who deemed it could not but be well received where he addressed it. There was admiration, not respect in the phrase. Even unsophisticated Minnie felt this; but so bewildered was she, that for the time she totally overlooked her actual position as it must be in his eyes, thus, with Tremenhere, as Miss Dalzell. "Do not let me alarm you," he continued courteously, seeing how pale she had turned; "believe me, I am too much a gentleman in any way to insult you. My meeting you again, though indeed I bless the good fate which has produced it, has been purely accidental. I came to see Mr. Tremenhere."

"Then, my——" she checked the word uppermost, "cousin," scarcely knowing why, "Lady Dora Vaughan," she substituted, "did not tell you where I resided? I thought so for a moment, and wondered much, she

was so fearful yesterday, lest your lordship should follow us."

"What can the connection between these women mean?" he thought, every moment more perplexed. "Lady Dora is, I know, a girl of independent mind: has she known this girl before her fall, and is she trying to reclaim her? If so, why walk in public with her? Or, has she been sitting to this Tremenhere for a portrait, and been brought in contact with this girl, and, charmed by her manner, overlooked her position? But—oh no, no!—Lady Dora would never act thus." It never struck him for an instant, the truth—Minnie's marriage; the "Miss Dalzell," and confusion of Lady Dora, completely refuted this idea.

"Lady Dora," he answered, smiling more composedly, now resolved to leave thought to absence, and enjoy the present pleasure of this unforeseen good-luck, "is totally ignorant of my purposed visit here, which was designed for Mr. Tremenhere on business."

Minnie, too, was gradually becoming more composed, now his visit had so natural a motive; she glided to an ottoman, and, pointing to a chair, apologised for her previous rudeness in omitting to offer one, and blaming her astonishment as cause of the remissness. Minnie was guiltless of wrong any way; so, as a friend of both her cousin and Miles, she conversed freely with her guest, whose admiration every moment became more decided, and, in proportion, a species of mixed jealousy and dislike towards Tremenhere, both for possessing such a treasure, and the base means by which he had gained it—seduc-

tion. For, with all his love of the fair sex, this was a crime in his eyes he would have scorned. Poor Minnie forgot, in her own innocence, all about her equivocal position, and he of course did not allude to it. He spoke of Tremenhere, and she replied unreservedly as of her husband; but without naming him as such. Lord Randolph did her justice in one respect; he saw she was too simple in mind, and, strange contradiction! too pure in thought, to be easily made comprehend any thing like ordinary flirtation. He, as a man of the world, though not a genius, at once perceived that it would only be by gaining her affections she might be won. He deemed it almost an act of justice to wrong the wronger; he would have gloried in it! Lord Randolph was one of the many: he possessed the genuine code of worldly morality—not a very safe bark to sail to the end of life in. Much he said to her which she could not comprehend; but he was Miles's friend, so she accepted his words as meant in mere friendship. He could make himself agreeable when he pleased; and she rejoiced in the meeting, hoping he would often call and see Miles, who must like him; she knew they were friends. Something of this she permitted him to understand.

"I fear," he said, abstaining from giving her any name, "Tremenhere, though a friend of mine, may not approve of my visits here; he has so sedulously concealed his happiness from all."

"Oh!" she answered, "that was on account of unfor-

tunate family affairs, which oblige us to live secluded; but I hope soon all will be cleared away of annoyance—all forgiven—and then we may summon our friends to rejoice with us."

There was something so artless in her manner, that he involuntarily seized her hand, and said in all sincerity, "From my soul I hope so, for your sake!"

At that moment he would have made any effort to restore an evidently innocent girl at heart, to a different position; his only wonder was, the longer he conversed with her, *how* she could ever have fallen; and every instant his impatience and disgust towards Tremenhere grew stronger. And he looked with indignant feelings on the presumption of the man who could, as he deemed he did, trample on this lovely girl as a being beneath him, too much so to share his name. How falsely we may judge others! and a wrong judgment is parent of many errors. At last he rose to leave; he durst not then prolong his visit. As he did so, Minnie inquired, "What message she should give Tremenhere?"

"I think," he replied, "it were better not to name my visit, if I may presume to dictate to you."

"But," she said, smiling in all confidence, "you came to see him."

"True; but I did not anticipate the extreme pleasure of meeting you. He might be displeased."

"Oh, no!" she answered in her former tone, "it cannot annoy him. I feared so at first, as he wishes me not to see, or be seen, at present; but when I tell him how

your lordship came, he will see it could not have been avoided. Besides, I told him of Lady Dora's introduction, and our all walking together yesterday."

"And what did he say?" asked the other, waking from surprise to surprise.

"Miles was very much annoyed with Lady Dora; he said, as a person experienced in the world's opinions, she ought not to have presented me to you, because——" She stopped, and coloured deeply, feeling it too delicate a subject to enter upon with a stranger. She had been so accustomed to speak of, hear of Lord Randolph as Dora's future husband, that he had seemed as already a cousin to her, though, in point of fact, almost a stranger. Poor Minnie had much worldly reserve to learn; besides, she was speaking as she knew herself, not as he suspected her; and there was nothing to awaken her rudely in his manner. She was as a somnambulist, speaking in her sleep, to the wakeful.

"Let me beg of you not to tell Tremenhere," he earnestly asked.

"I never conceal a thought from him," was her reply; "how pass an hour with him, and keep a secret in my heart? I should suffocate with the weight of it alone."

"I think I know Tremenhere better than even you can. Women rarely know men, as their friends read them; for your own sake, let me earnestly entreat secresy this once."

His earnestness made her tremble, and become serious. "I do not comprehend your lordship," she said with dignity; "have I done wrong in conversing freely with you?"

"Good heavens! no; I trust we may often thus converse again."

"Then I shall tell Miles as soon as he returns; he cannot but approve my receiving his friends with what courtesy I am mistress of. If I have been wanting in due reserve, my lord may excuse it—I am but a country bred girl."

"But the most charming one I *ever* met!" he warmly exclaimed, endeavouring to seize her hand; but Minnie's delicacy had taken the alarm, she drew back, and, laying her hand on the bell, said quietly—

"Your lordship has no message to leave?"

"None," he answered, slightly disconcerted by her sudden reserve—"I cannot think of troubling you; I will write."

The bell sounded beneath her fingers; with perfect composure she curtsied. He durst not again attempt to take her hand, and he followed the serious maid to the outer gate; there he turned, but no eye was watching him, for Minnie had sunk on a seat, and was lost in memory, not of the most agreeable sort, of many strange things her visiter had said, which created an unpleasant sensation, and yet she could not tell where, or why. Lord Randolph rode on in perplexed imaginings, too; she had left an impression on his mind of pleasure and pain. The former, that irresistible feeling we experience when gazing upon either a lovely face, or lovely picture. The latter, was sorrow that so fair a shrine should be desecrated; for, though a man of the world, he was no libertine. He would rather at any time save a woman than

lose her. If he found her lost, irretrievably so, he followed the current of worldly recklessness, and left moralizing to a more fitting occasion. Nothing could have persuaded him that this girl had voluntarily chosen a life of degradation—some arts, some entrapment, must have been used; and with these thoughts in his mind he turned into Loundes Square, intending to call upon Lady Dora. As he turned the corner of a street leading into it, her ladyship's brougham passed him rapidly; the blinds were half drawn down, as if she wished to avoid recognition, and she herself was leaning back, reading a letter attentively. Evidently he had not been noticed; for a moment he hesitated, and then, turning round, cantered after her. Her groom drove on, however, at a rapid pace, and Lord Randolph followed. "When she stops," he said to himself, "I'll join her; she may be induced, perhaps, to tell me more about this unhappy girl." But Lady Dora did not stop; and what at first had been done unpremeditatedly, now became a sort of link in the mystery of the last two days. Where could she be going alone at that rapid pace? Overtake her he could not, without calling to her groom; so he followed about twenty yards behind. At the corner of Charles Street, Soho, there was a stoppage of carriages; hers passed, but his horse, being rather spirited, made some demur before a coal-waggon; and, when he reached the square, it was just in time to see Lady Dora enter the bazaar hastily, with her veil down. To dismount, and leave his horse in a man's care, occupied a few minutes more; then he too entered,

with no idea but one—of finding her ladyship occupied in shopping; and he deemed himself very fortunate in having so excellent an opportunity of conversing with her.

We have said Lady Dora was reading a letter when Lord Randolph first saw her; we will give its contents to our readers; she had received it by a messenger an hour before.

"Mr. Tremenhere presents his compliments to Lady Dora Vaughan; and though he would not presume to intrude thus for any merely personal business, yet as the husband of one allied so closely to Lady Dora, he ventures to solicit half an hour's conversation about Minnie, and the most unpleasant affair of yesterday. He dare not venture to intrude in Loundes Square, but at three precisely, he will be in the Soho Bazaar; and under these circumstances, hopes her ladyship will favour him, where one dear to her is so nearly concerned."

When Lord Randolph entered, it was to see Lady Dora and Miles Tremenhere composedly ascending the stairs together—not arm in arm, but in close converse. To turn, and bolt out of the bazaar, were the acts of an instant—he was too proud to become a spy on their actions: that they had met by appointment was evident. In a greater state of excitement than before, he mounted his horse, and, riding to the opposite side of the square, watched the door. Nearly half an hour elapsed, and then she came out hurriedly alone, stepped in, and off drove the brougham again at a quick pace. Two minutes afterwards Tremenhere came out; and, with eyes bent on

the ground in deep thought, turned through Charles into Oxford Street. There is a natural envy in our hearts, which makes us feel less kindly towards one superior to ourselves in every way, than we should to one inferior; and were we judging between the two, assuredly we would rather find a guilty flaw in the one than the other. Though liking Tremenhere, Lord Randolph at once condemned him as every thing that was bad; and deemed himself of wonderful perspicacity in reading the intricate book before his mind's eye, thus:—By his power of fascination and good looks, he had entangled both these women. (Dalby had given him the clue.) Minnie he had lost, and by some inconceivable means, drawn the proud Lady Dora into an acquaintance with her; and now he was endeavouring, and from their private meeting it would seem successfully, to accomplish some further end—marriage, of course—with a woman too much in love, perhaps, to resist him. How else could he account for the events before him? With all this in his mind, is it to be wondered at that he felt the utmost disgust for Tremenhere? How to act he knew not. As to quietly allowing these events to take their present course, that was impossible—whom consult? Not Burton—he did not like the man; nor Dalby—no *creature*—but a friend. So he went off, and sought his young friend whom we have seen at Uplands—the unfledged youth, whom we will call Mr. Vellumy; and between them the two concocted as fatal a scheme as they could well have imagined; and done, like many such another, with the best intention; for Mr. Vellumy, like his friend, would rather do a

good than a bad action—not that he was one to repent in sackcloth and ashes if he accomplished a criminal one by accident. He was "a good-intention" embodied, and stuck like a crow on the top of a weathercock. He and Lord Randolph being bosom friends, had ran up together for two or three days from Uplands, leaving the remaining guests at Liberty Hall to take care of themselves—bachelor *sans ceremonie*. We will leave them awhile and follow Lady Dora, whose brougham spun, in a short space like thought, down to Chiswick, and stopped at Tremenhere's gate. He had, of course, not returned. Minnie could scarce credit the evidence of her eyes when she saw her cousin step out.

"It is so kind—so very kind, dear Dora!" she exclaimed, embracing her, "to return so soon."

"I have but a few minutes to stay," answered the other, "for mamma will wonder where I have been. But that I am not much controlled, she might question and scold; for I have been out some time, Minnie," she added hastily. "Do you know with whom I have been walking?"

"I cannot guess, Dora."

"There—read that—and see!" and she laid on her knee Miles's letter. Minnie coloured deeply, and like a vision passed before her the recollection of their meeting at Uplands, which he never mentioned. She was not jealous; but it was like the sudden pain of a thorn, which makes one wince and cry out—the flesh *versus* spirit; but when she read it, the spirit conquered at once.

"My dear husband," she said, "how he ever thinks of me! And what did he say, Dora?"

Dora then told her the substance of their conversation, and his entreaties that she should seek an interview with Lord Randolph Gray, and tell him the truth about his marriage, as it would come better from her than from himself. If, however, she declined, he expressed his determination to do so without delay, foreseeing possibly future embarrassments from this unfortunate introduction.

"I argued against it," she said; "but at last he convinced me I had not acted prudently, and therefore, though much against my feelings, I must explain all, and bind his lordship to secresy. It is a most unfortunate circumstance altogether."

Lady Dora, though too kind, when she permitted her heart sway, to pain any one wilfully, was galled and wounded deeply in her pride by all these events. How to tell Lord Randolph she knew not; and with Tremenhere she admitted, it would better come from herself than from him. "I shall probably see him to-night, or certainly to-morrow," she added, "and then all shall be explained."

While she was speaking, Minnie had fallen into a train of the most intense thought; one coursing another through her brain. She was beginning to understand much Randolph had said to her, and how tell Miles? it would pain him. However, it would soon be explained to his lordship, and then all would go smoothly. Poor Minnie!

"Do you know, Dora," she said, looking up at last, seriously, "Lord Randolph called here to-day?"

"Here!" exclaimed her cousin, amazed. "Here! and how? on what pretence? did you see him?"

There was not a gleam of jealousy in this questioning. She cared little to lose him for ever; it was his audacity, and consequences she thought of. Minnie related every thing which passed. Though but a girl herself, Lady Dora was one of the world, and saw much more than her simple cousin did in this visit. Bitterly she blamed herself for her false step the previous day, in introducing "Miss Dalzell;" now she indeed saw the necessity of an explanation.

"Of course," she said, "you do not intend telling Mr. Tremenhere of this?"

"Not tell Miles!" exclaimed Minnie in surprise. "How could I conceal it from him?"

"Minnie, you will be mad to do so!" answered her cousin, much agitated. "Mr. Tremenhere, in his excited state, will see even more than was meant, and I will answer for nothing."

"Truth, dear Dora, always carries its own shafts to the heart. I cannot conceal any thing from Miles; it would kill me to do so. Where should I hide a secret from him? he reads my very soul; 'tis ever open before him."

"And do you wish, perhaps, for bloodshed? I cannot see where it will terminate. Pray, let me explain all to his lordship first, then there can be nothing to fear."

Minnie justly argued, that Lord Randolph's visit had been made to her husband, not knowing she was even there; but Dora overruled this.

"Mr. Tremenhere," she said, "was in that excited state when speaking of the possibility of insult to you, that if he know this to-day, he will be capable of any thing. Pray, Minnie!—dear Minnie! promise me the secret until to-morrow evening; I will come here then, and tell Mr. Tremenhere myself, and he must acknowledge I did right. He will applaud your good sense; whereas, if you tell, what can control his rage before then?"

Minnie began crying. The idea to her, of concealment from Miles, was so dreadful, that she could not for a length of time overcome her repugnance; but Dora so forcibly impressed upon her mind the dread of a duel, that in the certainty of its only being for one day, and as no untruth, only silence, was required, she consented; and Lady Dora, embracing her cordially, with her own handkerchief dried the tearful eyes, and left her, promising to return next evening, and in the meanwhile see Lord Randolph, and disclose all to him. She had perfectly arranged it herself, as we often do events; but quite overlooked such a thing as fatality.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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